

ART FROM THE UNKNOWN

A Christmas Celebration of 80 Local Artists Living on Low Income

This exhibit profiles the work of local low income artists. Their work is incredible and speaks to the importance of art in our lives. As well, the exhibit attempts to draw attention to the problem of poverty in our province.

Everyone is welcome to attend and admission is free.



ART BY ALMIER 1999

OPENING NIGHT

Free Music, Food, Mingling

WEDNESDAY, 15 DEC. 1999 @ 7:30 PM

Organized by: Raj Pannu-MLA, Poverty in Action & Our Voice Magazine.

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ART EXHIBIT AND SALE

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the
spare change
magazine

Our Voice

Gandhi
OUR VOICE
PERSON OF THE CENTURY



Mei Hurting
Talks about his new book

A Look Back
at a Century of Social Action

Our Voice

Publisher:
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Managing Editor
Michael Walters
Design and Production
Dave Luxton
Distribution
Natasha Robinson
Proof Readers
Kara Dublenko

428-4001 in Edmonton
1-888-428-4001

Editorial Offices and
Edmonton Distribution at:
Bissell Centre
10527-96 Street • Edmonton, Alberta
T5H 2H6
Phone: 428-4001 • Fax: 497-7077
EMAIL:
sparech@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca
WEBSITE:
www.planet.eon.net/~kwiley/
voicehome.html

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communicating about their
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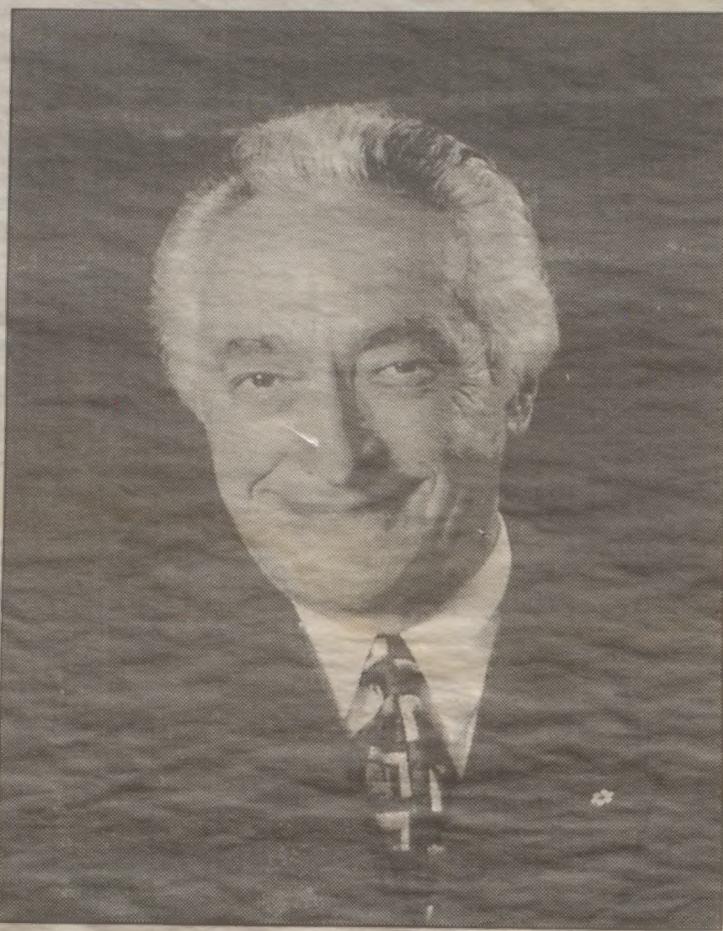
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Mel Hurtig

Hurtig's look at poverty tells the truth

Interview by Dale Ladouceur

Everyone knows Canada is the best country in the world. It has been for the last six years according to the United Nations. What is lesser known are the very narrow sets of measurements used to get the number one status. Even lesser still is the embarrassing 1998 report by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, outraged by Canada's neglect of the poor.

While the gap between the rich and poor steadily increases, so does the mountain of rhetoric from politicians, business leaders and the media. We are constantly fed the "everything is rosie" line from the Department of Finance while many know the demand on food banks has doubled.

In a powerful, compassionate and no-holds-barred account, Mel Hurtig's "Pay the Rent or Feed the Kids, the Tragedy & Disgrace of Poverty in Canada" brings together the "real" stats and "real" stories that paint a tragic and vivid picture of poverty in our country. Here's what Hurtig told Our Voice in a recent interview.

OV: When I spoke to you this spring you were working on this book but it was called 'The Good Country'. What has changed?

HURTIG: Here's what happened, I started off to do quite a different book. I started off writing a book on the Myths and Realities in the Canadian Economy and how what we read, what we hear, what we see is often profoundly different than what really happens. And I was going to look at these things and how the research institutes of the economic elite, such as the Fraser

Institute and the C.D. Howe Institute report things and how the press then reports them and how in many, many cases, the truth is very different. Then I was going to look at what I call the Good Country and what would be the characteristics of a just, egalitarian progressive country. The first chapter was going to be about poverty in Canada and the second about child poverty. As I began doing my interviews across the country about poverty, the more I saw, the more appalled I became and the angrier I became, then the sadder I became. So I changed the book to focus on the terrible degree of real deprivation and misery that exists in this country.

In terms of distribution of income if you look at the richest 20% and compare them to the poorest 20%, in a list of 32 developed countries we are 25th in terms of how fair we are.

OV: With all this poverty, how did we get the United Nations number one standing for the sixth time?

HURTIG: I cover that at the beginning of the book and I discuss how Canada has been condemned now, twice, by the UN for allowing the terrible degree of poverty, homelessness and hunger in this country. The number one status is based on a very narrow set of measurements, but in terms of internationally accepted measurements of poverty, which are contained in that same UN human development report 1999, we have one of the worst levels of poverty among the developed nations in the world. We're 16th overall in the commonly accepted international definition of poverty and in terms of distribution of income if you look at the richest 20% and compare them to the poorest 20%, in a list of 32 developed countries we are 25th in terms of how fair we are. So it's a terrible record. Unfortunately the press is focused and the Chretian government is focused on the number one ranking and it's so narrow, based on longevity, based on other factors and many of the factors that led to that number one ranking have been subsequently and seriously eroded with the cutbacks to our social transfers.

OV: You are heading out on a tour across Canada. How do you think the book will be received?

HURTIG: The book will be viciously attacked in the National Post, by some people in the Globe and Mail. I have a chapter called the war against the poor in Canada where I point my finger quite specifically at the Fraser Institute and the National Post and Globe and Mail and the department of finance, so that kind of thing is not calculated to make you a lot of friends but you don't accomplish anything significant just by quietly accepting what the status quo is.

I only wish that everybody could have been with me when I did the interviews across the country. To see the sadness, misery, and poverty in this country, the children that don't have enough to eat. Young kids that go to school without proper clothing, kids are arriving in grade one without even knowing what a book is. The mothers who agonize over the fact that they lost their temper with one of the kids because the kid ate an orange and that orange was suppose to be lunch for the next day. Many similar examples that would just break your heart. I wish people could have been with me to see all of this. ♦

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The Our Voice Person of the Century

A new century is about to dawn. We have been hearing all kinds of trepidations and amazements about the future of humanity. Neither the rumours of Apocalypse nor the approaching of the New Age of Global Peace has any validity. A new Worldwide Unity will not emerge overnight on January 1, 2000 AD. Evolution is not a sudden transformation of the human brain and mind's psyche.

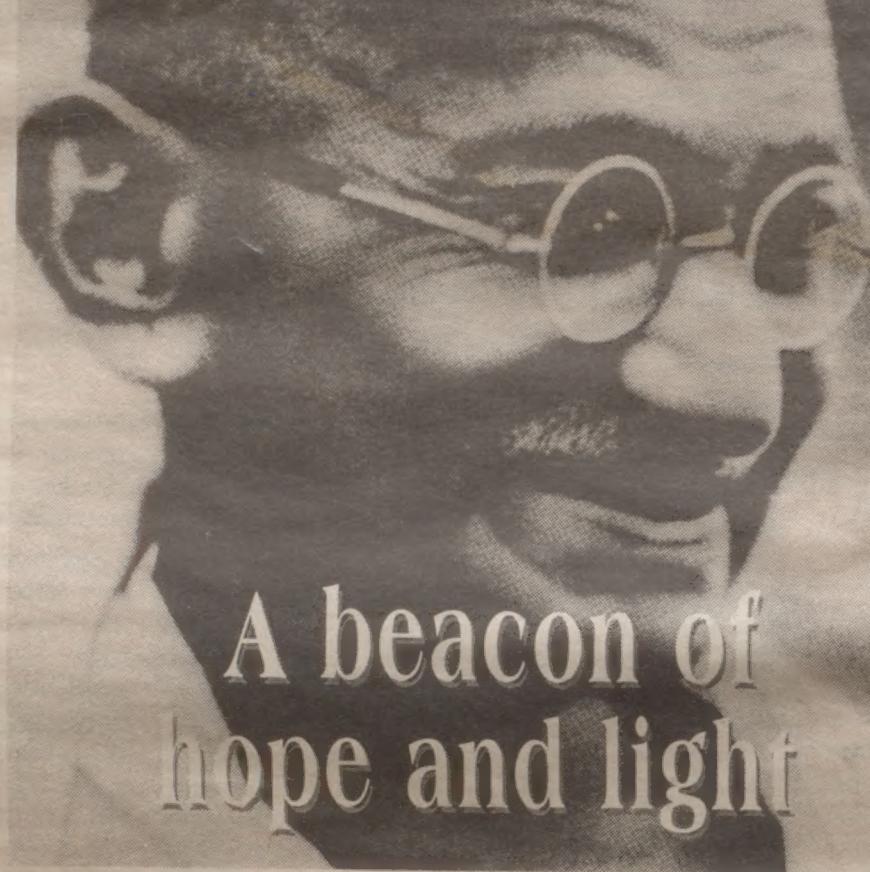
Innumerable members of the human race have impacted our destinies in the last 1000 years. The survey polls conducted by the Globe and Mail and Microsoft gave Gandhi an honourable place along with the west's most brilliant, rational and scientific minds like Einstein, Freud and Karl Marx. Einstein pointed out that time and space are interconnected and not separate. His theory of relativity altered man's conscious forever. Freud discovered the unconscious which was the storehouse of all desires. His theories of dreams and psychoanalysis made a breakthrough in mental health. Marx's philosophical and economic writings had a profound impact on the world of sociology and political economy. Marx reminded that the rule of Capital was the domination of living men by dead matter. Marx has been alienated from other men, their neighbours and nature. For Marx, man/woman should become a being who is much rather the one who has much. On the other hand, Gandhi emerges as a leader of mankind in this millennium for his moral courage, commitment to the service of humanity without any semblance of any desire for power, money or social status. He wanted the social and political transformation of the world. He knew that you can't transform others unless one gains purity of desirelessness, non violence and fearlessness. Let us visit a college of Gandhi during India's freedom movement. He observed: "Gandhi fears no one and frightens no one. He recognizes no conventions except what are absolutely necessary from not being removed from society of men and women. He recognizes no masters and no gurus. He owns no property, keeps no bank balance, makes no investments, yet makes no fuss about asking for anything he needs."

His austere and ascetic lifestyle won the hearts and trust of Indians. He showed no hesitation in meeting the Governor General in loin cloth and a blanket over his shoulders.

The philosophy of Jainism and the Jesus lectures on the Mount impressed upon him immensely and refined his thinking on non violence. Gandhi called it Ahimsa (harmlessness). Mathematical formula which Gandhi applied on a mass scale to overcome his opponents was:

Ahimsa = non violence and unconditional love - cowardice. He abhorred cowardliness and Ahimsa had no place for it. He borrowed heavily from the Western philosophers. Tolstoy taught him non violent resistance, Ruskin impressed on him the dignity of labour and equality of all. Workers and Thoreau taught him civil disobedience. Gandhi certainly refined these ideas to shift Indian temperament. He challenged the mighty British Empire through his resistance movement called Satyagraha, which means truth force. One would fight with love rather than hatred. The practitioners detested the injustice and oppression but not the oppressors. Before starting his civil disobedience campaign he explained his intentions to the viceroy. He wrote, "My Ambition is no less than to Convert the

Mahatma Gandhi



A beacon of hope and light

British People through non violence and thus make them see the wrong they have done to India. I do not seek to harm your people, I want to serve them as I serve my own." He felt that the humanity is at the Crossroads and it must choose either the jungle law of the brute or the law of humanity. More than two thousand years ago Socrates declared that it is better to suffer pain and injustice than to inflict it on any one. Mahatma gave a psychological twist by saying that in non violence bravery consists in dying rather than killing and for him Ahimsa was a quality of the human heart that does not appeal to the brain. It requires self purification. In the west the non violent resistance is epitomized by the teaching and actions of Jesus. Gandhian Satyagrahi (Peace Soldiers) was committed to non violence and love. He was interested in self transformation and the transformation of his adversary and the society at large. Mahatma proved it not by a theoretical argument but by demonstration.

Gandhi's religious philosophy was Universalist. For him all forms of worship were the worship of the Divine. Ishwar, Allah, Christ, Vishnu and Cosmic are different names of that Supreme Reality. He once remarked: By religion but that religion which underlies all religions which brings face to face with our doctrine which did not appeal to his reason and to his moral sense. The purpose of the scriptures is to illuminate truth and purify reason. In his view, no holy scripture could ever transcend the truth. Conversions are unnecessary and harmful as it destroys people's cultural and spiritual roots and tears up their lives. Once a cleric sarcastically remarked to him: "We both are Sons of God, isn't it true? Indeed you are a politician disguised as a Son of God." Gandhi said to him with a smile, "I am a Son of God disguised as a politician." He recited passages from Bhagwad Gita, New Testament and Koran in his prayer meetings. He described Jesus as the most active resister known in history.

One can safely assume that Gandhi was a social activist rather than a passive contemplative, though he observed silence and engaged in prayer to restore his inner self. Gandhi is par excellence in his ecolog-

ical thinking and practised frugality, simplicity and rejected mass industry. He was uncompromising in his attacks on labour saving technology. The technology of mass production is inherently violent, ecologically damaging and suffocates the human spirit.

Petra Kelley, one of the founders of the Green movement acknowledges her debt to Gandhi. The Greens stood on Gandhian value system of non violent resistance for social justice, equality and preservation of the planet's ecology. She wrote "As we are facing a crisis of civilization on this planet Earth there is more attention paid to Gandhi's idea on non violence."

Above all, Gandhi believed in egalitarianism both social and economic. He declared: "Suppose I have come by a fair amount of wealth, either by way of legacy or by means of trade and industry, must know that all wealth does not belong to me. What belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of my wealth belongs to the Community. I want the privileged classes to outgrow their greed and sense of possession and to come down in spite of their wealth to the level of those who earn their bread by labour. This is a challenge to all socialist

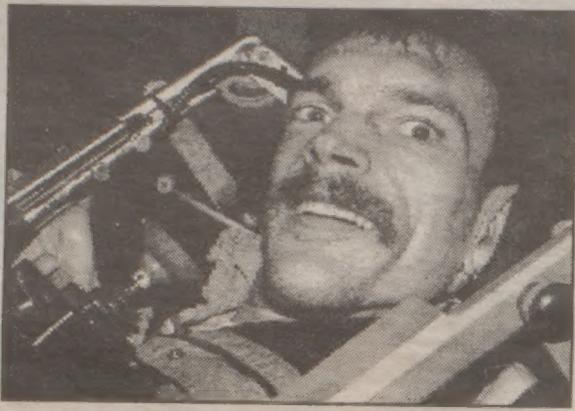
leaders to engage in this form of egalitarianism. Like the Stoics, he discovered that man's conscience must be the arbiter of his conduct. He reminded us that all men are brothers and no human being is a stranger to another. This attitudinal transformation cannot happen overnight. Gandhi admitted that this goal of true brotherhood of humanity was achieved by him by a long process of prayerful discipline. He wrote "I have made no distinction between relatives and strangers, country men and foreigners, whites and coloureds, Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Jews. I may say that my heart is incapable of making such distinctions." He believed that God is the common bond that unifies all peoples. If we break this bond even with our greatest foes, then this is to tear God to pieces. Mahatma Gandhi saw a common humanity even with the most wicked.

Prem Kalia

Other people who were suggested to us by our readers for the Our Voice person of the century were Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa, Woodie Guthrie, and Rosa Parks. On a Canadian scale there were names like Tommy Douglass, Banting and Best and John Diefenbaker, locally the most popular name was Mary Burlie, the inner city angel.♦



Mary Burlie



Letter to the Editor

Firstly I am so impressed by the quality and improvement in your paper. It is magnificent. I have so much to say that I hope you will not get tired of reading and cast my letter aside.

I cried when I heard of Rick Bertram's death. I was fortunate enough to know that Cerebral Palsy does not affect the I.Q. and always treated Rick with normal respect and discussion.

There are 2 good things to come out of the disgrace of which he was treated and one is that this will be a wake up call to people to get into positive, not aggressive, action. The second thing that comforted me was Lana, his sister's words that if "Rick was a bird he would fly." Whatever you or anyone's conception of the after-life is I hope Rick is flying free as any bird.

My second comment was let us get a special day for a mass march for the homeless. Let us petition or whatever it takes; perhaps a mass sit in at the legislature to draw attention to the seriousness of the problem and our demand would be an annual march. Banners, signs, singing and perhaps a celebrity such as Bill Bourne in the march. These annual marches are allowed for gay people, Born Again Christians. Why not us?

Many people with comfortable lives but social consciousness will come if we spend money on advertising and use the media.

One more point. "Dear people who buy the paper; don't just buy and walk on by but have a few words with the vendors, buy them a coffee or after the farmer's market, offer them a peach, apple, orange, etc. Remember: There but for fortune go you and I."

Regards:

Shanti Shanka

Editors Note:

Regarding Rick Bertram, former *Our Voice* Vendor.

Contributions can be made to the Rick Bertram Grave Marker Fund at Evergreen Memorial Gardens. Evergreen has put in half of the cost which is \$1600 to pay for a grave stone marking the burial spot of Rick. Please call Deena Goulet at 472-9007 if you wish to contribute.

InfoPlanet

A Short Alternative History of the Twentieth Century

The century nearly past has seen a vast number of changes on a global scale. In some ways, these changes have resulted in improvements in the lot of the world's poorest and most marginalized citizens; in other ways, the plight of the world's disadvantaged has only worsened.

1900-1929- At the beginning of the century, there was still a great deal of hope that the moral and scientific progress of the human species would soon eliminate poverty and war. Henry Ford believed that the assembly-line factory would provide high-paying jobs for all, and comfortable living close to nature in the suburbs. The post-war economic boom of the '20s bolstered this optimism. The newly formed USSR was industrializing rapidly. Citizens of the rich world could remain blissfully unaware that their prosperity was built largely on the genocide of North American First Nations, on the pillage of Europe's colonies overseas, and on the bloody European War (a.k.a. World War I) that resulted from it. After all, war is good for business.

1929-1960- Along came the '30s. Poverty and unemployment were epidemic, even in the wealthy

countries of the industrialized West. Even then, the rise of unions and a strong labour movement seemed to offer some hope for the poor. After the unprecedented scale of the carnage in WWII, the relative wealth of the '50s promised comfort, security, and electronic appliances in every household - even though some were left out of that suburban dream. McCarthyism and a horrific war seemed a small price to pay for universal (er, that is, American) prosperity.

1960-1975- In the '60s, the colonized nations of Africa began to demand independence at an alarming rate - alarming, that is, to the European colonial powers, who saw their pools of cheap labour and resources disappearing. The new independence of many black African states seemed to herald a new era of world equality and post-colonial freedom. The "green revolution" would enable an end to the problem of hunger. In Europe and North America, students and hippies were championing the cause of universal freedom and world peace. Public opinion brought an end to America's war in Vietnam. Despite the frightening brinkmanship of Kruschev-era Cold War politics, things seemed to be looking up for the world's oppressed peoples.

1976-1999- In the last quarter of this century, however, Europe and America have found ways to keep the world's poor in check. During the '70s and '80s - the era of Thatcher and Reagan - the groundwork was laid for the crippling debt that now keeps most of Africa, South and Central America, and many parts of Asia and Eastern Europe in permanent servitude. Under the guise of "aid" to countries ravaged by

colonialism and by often bloody struggles for freedom, the world's rich have devised even more effective means of controlling those nations.

Organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF have forced poorer countries to submit to the Euro-American model of industrialization on a massive scale. In the process, we've destroyed their subsistence economies and dragged them into the destructive game known as "free trade" or "globalization." The "green revolution" has turned out only to make money for agribusiness, polluting and degrading much of the world's arable land base, while leaving over a fifth of the world's population at or near starvation levels.

Even in the industrialized North, inner city ghettos exist in a state of abject poverty - abandoned by their elected governors, who go home to gated communities. The price of wealth, in the form of global warming, the death of the world's oceans, and the growth of environmental diseases, is only now becoming fully apparent. The last ten years have seen more death through constant small, localized wars, than WWI, WWII, and the Vietnam War put together.

This isn't a very optimistic picture of the 20th century. However, some recent developments could offer encouragement to those now living under the thumb of unrestricted growth and the "free" market. Stay tuned for next month's column as we look ahead at these developments.

Tamara Schwartzentruber

The Great Teacher" is recognized on World AIDS Day.

Feather of Hope Aboriginal AIDS Society (FOHAAPS) has a unique way of looking at HIV/AIDS. We work with Aboriginal Persons living with HIV/AIDS (APHA) and with Elders from across Alberta. They are giving us a special message to take to our community: you have a way to help yourself. Aboriginal Elders believe having HIV/AIDS is not a medical matter, that health is not a medical matter; rather HIV/AIDS is a Life matter. Further, they say, Health is a Divine matter. They believe only one entity gives good health - The Creator. This is the reason health and spirituality are so tied up together in the Aboriginal community, why our medicine people's base is spirituality.

There are a number of prophecies about HIV/AIDS coming from our Old People. They call HIV the "Shapeshifter" because of its ability to adapt/mutate to medication and change itself in the body. They call

AIDS "The Great Teacher" - they say AIDS is the first of ten new diseases coming to the people. It came to us because we forgot how to be men and women together. It has so much compassion for human kind it has come to teach us how to be a community again. If we do not learn from this Great Teacher, then those nine new diseases will come and they will have no compassion for humankind.

In our experience, it is those Aboriginal people who have a connection to their communities and culture/spirituality that are the least at risk for HIV/AIDS or any other disease or social ills. The practice of this spirituality is based on four tenets: Sharing, Caring, Honesty and Respect. The way to understand and practice these tenets is prayer. We use our medicines to open the doors for us to needed answers and healing/health. Old People tell us we are a people from a oral culture, our mouths, what we say and how we say it - is a very important part of our immune system. Moralizing, gossiping, slander, judging and condemning one another all cause horrific illness. But when we come in a circle of people and speak openly and honestly with one another, wonderful things can

happen, when we come to a circle of people and pray, miracles can happen.

Freedom does not mean being devoid of responsibilities, rather it means being responsible for your life. Old People tell us you must represent yourself to the Creator and tell him what you want for your life. They promise us we were not put on the Earth to live in drudgery, misery, poverty, filth, illness and disease. They say the Creator has made plenty of everything for everyone. The reason there is poverty, disease, squalor and misery is because Man made a choice to allow other men to live this way.

The lesson of AIDS is all about relationships: how we treat ourselves and how we treat others. Our politicians boast Canada has one of the highest standards of living in the world and Alberta is one of the wealthiest provinces. I question this claim because the disparity between those who have and those who have not has never been so great. Perhaps the greatest lesson of AIDS is that it shows us who in our community we have not been treating well, who we have forgotten, who we have neglected. ♦

Mansions, Media and Morty Stealing from the poor and giving to the rich

Michael Walters

Big News. The wealthy are falling into the river. Well not the actual people, but their mansions are. I guess that's the price you pay for living on the edge, so very close to the heart of scenic Edmonton, gated away from the rest of the city.

It is really too bad when people end up homeless. I mean it. Being homeless is a terrible thing, no matter what socioeconomic status you exist in.

The big story in the media was the Riverbend homeless, a phenomenon very unfamiliar to such an affluent community. It was an incredible amount of press and air time all of this received, but what was more amazing was the number of times the media used the word "homeless" to describe the plights of these residents.

Fortunately the city jumped in to help them out through this difficult time. They were given free hotel rooms until things were sorted out, until everyone understood why these homes toppled down into the valley.

I won't get into all the legalities and claims and the arguments about who's really to blame. What concerns me is the attention given to this situation and the values that this reflects. Also how the city reacted compared to how it's reacting to the true homeless problem.

For most of the 90's homelessness has been increasing at a troubling rate. Last year in a half hearted one day count there were more than 800 people discovered living homeless in our city. The real number is more likely double that.

The obvious question is why is the city not responding to the thousands of people who are without homes in the less upscale communities in Edmonton. And why isn't the media interested in covering true homelessness every day like they were with the Riverbend misfortunes. More people are ending up and remaining on the streets daily. It's real news about real human tragedy. The inner city homeless don't have the luxury of subsidized hotel stays. If they're

lucky a mat at one of the hostels will be available or the doorway of an apartment building will act as shelter for the night.

Some of these questions have fairly obvious answers. There is something... well kind of neat about mansions falling into the river. It makes a big bang and the media has always fancied the big bang. But still it's not all that important and really I think a lot of people are aware that more than a thousand people living on the streets is a much bigger bang. However, in our supposed new information culture the purveyors of the information simply choose not to look at it this way, hence the apathy that develops among the masses. It's no wonder we're more interested in watching houses fall into the river than we are in the fact that thousands of our fellow citizens live on the streets in terrible poverty.

UNEMPLOYMENT. POLLUTION. POVERTY. TAXES--
EVERYTHING IS GOING UP
EXCEPT FOR MY PROSPECTS!



The Faceless Insignificant One

I have a name, I'm not a number
My IQ score will only show I'm dumber
I want a job, really bad.
No experience, not hired, so sad.
No money to buy the necessities, I need
Someone to help, would be great indeed.
Can anyone out there here my call?
I feel like a racehorse, left in the stall.
My mood and ambitions are really a mess
The wealthy and well connected, couldn't care less.
My get up and go, got up and went.
My view of the world is really bent.
Where is my lucky break to be found?
When my hands and my feet are tightly bound.
If only someone, would take a chance with me
I would be better than what I was expected to be.
During this time of good spirits and cheer
I expect to shed many a tear.
The new year to come brings little hope.
I'm almost at the end of my rope.
Try as hard as I might
My world is not a pretty sight.
Prove to me that you really care
If you have more than you need, then share.

As positive and productive as we can be

Cec Garfin

This poem represents the situation far too many people find themselves in, often through no fault of their own.

"We often seem to be going through the motions rather than believing that we can change society for the better. We need passion directed at pulling together all those who care about a better society. We need the wisdom of everybody to see the potential of the 21st century." This is from the writings of Willis Harman.

The message I am trying to convey is that talk is cheap and action speaks louder than words. Be honest and realistic. Don't judge others by their friends, clothing, wealth, transportation or shelter. It's like judging a book by its cover, a movie by the preview or gold by its glitter (fools gold). No one is perfect, we all make mistakes. What we need to do is learn from them, accept failure and try harder. I look at life like a roller coaster or an elevator, having ups and downs, also a highway with speed bumps.

Every individual must develop and implement personal goals, but as a member of a community we must

Editor's OPINION

Our Voice

the spare change magazine

I had a conversation with a regular here at Bissell Centre. His name is Morty and he has been forced to leave many houses he's lived in because they had been condemned. His wildest story is one night while sleeping the roof began to cave in. Luckily he awoke and managed to get him and his girlfriend off the premises avoiding injury. It was not a derelict house. He was paying \$500 rent per month and had lived there for six months. His landlord refused to pay for alternate accommodations and of course there was not any city money available for him to stay in a hotel.

Morty and his girlfriend had to resort to splitting up in order to find shelter. Morty got a bed at the Herb Jameison shelter and his girlfriend at a women's shelter. Eventually his girlfriend ended up moving back to Manitoba and the relationship ended. Morty was on AISH at the time and couldn't afford a damage deposit and first months rent so he did the shelter circuit. He managed eventually to save up and borrow enough to get an apartment. But he did lose a relationship of four years and had to endure the stress of not knowing where he'd lay his head each night for more than eight months.

Maybe if Morty was rich and lived in a big house in River Bend his situation and the situations of thousands of other poor Edmontonians would be taken seriously. Maybe the city would commit the measly 1.3 million dollars to helping provide housing for truly homeless Edmontonians. And maybe the media would have come to the streets of Edmonton's downtown core every day until Morty had found a new place to live. Yeah but I guess it's not as interesting to watch a poor person move his thrift store couch into a small inner city apartment as it is to watch a rich guy move a dead, stuffed lion that cost him \$80,000 out of his giant Riverbend house.

Sometimes this world is too backwards for words. ♦

have a clear mission to establish a sense of belonging, encourage healthy development and further self-esteem and economic security of all members. We gain strength in numbers, recognize the dignity and respect that everyone deserves and help each other cope successfully through adjustment periods.

The first New Year's resolution I would suggest everyone make is to be as positive and productive as you possibly can be. Secondly, wherever and however you can, help others to be the same way. Trust that the world can be a better place.

On behalf of all vendors
and staff of Our Voice,
happy holidays to everyone.

The Spirit of the Season

Heather Slade

Ruth is 26 and a mother of a 4 year-old son, Liam. He was born with Down's Syndrome when she was only 22. It was a shock to her, since this genetic disorder is usually confined to the children of older mothers. Liam was born in September, 3 months before Christmas. Ruth remembers when she first saw her son.

"I knew right away that something was wrong. He looked different, but he was my baby and I loved him," she says. Liam became the centre of her life, just like any newborn. But, he was even more work.

"He couldn't swallow very well and I had to be careful that he didn't choke." Liam's father hadn't even stuck around long enough for Ruth to get home from the hospital. She had no support outside of her aging mother. She was so busy with all that her new son required, she nearly forgot about the fast approaching holiday season. It was only during her outings to the local mall that she was reminded. There she saw the decorations, heard the piped in carols and watched the excited children clamber onto Santa's lap. "I had to fight feelings of jealousy. It wasn't fair that my baby was 'different'."

As a new mom, she was fiercely protective and extremely sensitive to the pitying looks she seemed to elicit when people saw her son.

Struggling as she was, emotionally, she was in no

better shape financially. Her boyfriend had left the province, evading child support payments. Her mother, although supportive in a generic way, lived only on a small pension. She was in no position to help Ruth with money. Ruth, herself, had a minimum wage job before she got pregnant. Now, she was forced to live on welfare. She hated the stereotypes that went with that.

With Christmas only weeks away, she still had no tree, presents or special food for the occasion. Depression and hopelessness were closing around her. On the day her baby turned 3 months old, December 7, she was desperate. She had heard of the world of food hampers, toys for kids and free community suppers. She just wasn't sure how to access them.

"I'm sure it was an act of providence," she says. "I've always given whatever change I've had in my purse to the Salvation Army kettles. This time, I only had a few cents, but I thought: it might still make a difference. I had no idea just what a difference!"

As she dropped what she recalls as "about 23 cents" into the kettle, she awkwardly struck up a conversation with the fellow ringing the bell.

"I'm sorry, it's not much, but it's all I've got," she explained, rather embarrassed.

"Then, your gift is the biggest one of all", said the stranger. "Most people just put in their excess money,

whatever is left over from all their Christmas shopping."

"Oh, I'm afraid there won't be much of that this year", she said, warming up to the man. He continued to ring the bells. The jingling had caught Liam's attention and he peeked out of the snugly bag on her chest. Ruth found herself bracing for the usual reaction of pity and withdrawal. It never came. The man smiled, and extended the bells for Liam to grasp. "What's his name?" he asked as he cooed at the baby. "Liam", she replied softly. "Hi Liam, I'm Tony and I have a son just a bit bigger than you." He gently took hold of the baby's hand and shook it, shaking the bells as well. Liam squealed with delight. After introducing herself, Ruth began to walk away.

"Hey, wait a minute!" Tony was calling. "I don't mean to pry, but I've gathered that you're having a hard time right now. Do you have anywhere to go for Christmas?" Ruth was uncertain about his intentions. Was this some new pick-up line? After all, she had been out of the loop for awhile. He seemed to read her thoughts and quickly added, "My wife and I are new to Edmonton, there's just the three of us and our son is only 5 months old. We are having Christmas dinner and we are looking for other families, who may be lonely too, to join us."

Ruth couldn't speak. She remembers her eyes filling with tears and nodding her head. She walked home, not even the cold bothered her.

The spirit of the season had warmed her heart and filled her with gratitude. ♦

Shopping justice at Just Christmas

Francis O'Malley

"Soul" in our Christmas experience.

In late November many local organizations gathered and through a co-operative effort, hosted the 16th annual 'Just Christmas' event. The yearly affair strives to provide quality arts and crafts while at the same time promoting social justice. The groups involved are generally engaged in global awareness activities and provide support to international development and humanitarian projects. Groups such as Amnesty International, The Poverty in Action Society, 10 Thousand Villages, and 10 Days for Global Justice were all interested in getting out the very important (and often forgotten) message that Christmas is a time that we can do more than just buy gifts for our friends and family - we can choose at the same time to support groups and organizations that make a big difference in the lives of some less fortunate people.

The 10 Thousand Villages organization travels the

world to purchase goods directly from third world artists and co-ops, all the while promoting important issues such as fair wages and childhood education. Ten Days for Global Justice also promotes fair wages and encourages shoppers to use their discretion and buy directly from artists and other organizations that are proven to be ethical in their means of production. Joyce, a volunteer, points out that Ten Days for Global Justice uses the "boycott" method which is a positive version of the "boycott" - this chooses to support and reward those merchants who treat people fairly and the environment properly.

The friendly, calm, and non-competitive environment of 'Just Christmas' is more than sales..." according to Leo Campos, one of the event organizers, "it is an opportunity to communicate worthwhile information to Edmontonians about other cultures and allow people to buy some really neat stuff too". ♦



Nancy McBeth, MLA

Edmonton McClung
6721 - 177 Street
Edmonton, AB T5T 4K3
414-6387



*Seasons Greetings
From Your Friends of
Alberta's Official Opposition*



Bill Bonner, MLA

Edmonton Glengarry
#213, 12907-97 Street
Edmonton, AB T5E 4C2
414-1328



Delivered to the light

The story of Calvin Kennedy

Michael Walters and John Zapantis

From his desk in the Bissell Centre drop in Calvin Kennedy looks over a room filled with people who maybe the poorest and some of the most disadvantaged in Edmonton. People come to the Bissell Centre for all kinds of reasons-some for food and clothing, some for employment opportunities, some for a warm cup of coffee and a supportive handshake.

"I enjoy working here with people who have been in positions I've been in. People who are homeless," says Calvin. He barely has time to sit and talk his way through this interview. People are asking for his help and he knows that's why he's here.

"I can relate to the people down here. People come and ask me for advice about how they can do it. How they can make a decision to change and improve their lives and I understand what they are saying."

Calvin's story leading up to his new mission is a rather tumultuous journey.

At the age of 16, while living in Lac La Biche, Calvin's father accidentally shot himself while hunting. The tragedy shattered Calvin emotionally. It did the same for the rest of his family. Calvin's mother turned to alcohol as a way of forgetting about the loss of her husband.

At this point the family moved to Edmonton. The pain of observing his mother's grief, hidden in a bottle, forced Calvin to the streets.

"That's when our whole family broke up and we went our separate ways. This is when I started drinking and getting into trouble. All in all I spent 12 years on the streets, in and out of jail. It was a terrible way to live.

"You know you don't really learn a lot on the streets. You don't really have friends unless you have money. It's tough."

One night in 1983, Calvin, being half cut, as he describes it, attempted to take the life of one of his relatives. Luckily he failed. He ended up in jail for 18 months for this crime and this is when he knew he had to make some changes in his life.

"I just got tired of drinking and of getting in trouble. I realized that I could have been in jail for manslaughter or even murder. Things had to change," he says.

From the time Calvin admitted to himself that changes were needed, it took almost ten years for him to break free from the icy grips of alcohol and drugs.

"When I got out jail that time, I sure had my ups and downs. There's all this peer pressure and it was hard to find a way to quit, but I stuck to it and did it."

In 1993, Calvin's biggest motivation to change his life came in the form of a child. He and his wife at the time gave birth to a son named Jordan.

"I quit everything. I took on the responsibility of raising my son. It was an incredible experience."

The following year his second son was born, but initially he remained in the custody of his mother. Then one night, Justin was delivered to Calvin's doorstep by his half drunk uncle. He has kept his family together ever since.

When Calvin talks of his two sons now aged 5 and 6, he says, "they mean the world to me. Without them I wouldn't have a life."

Calvin's new employment, which started in June of this year, makes it much easier for him to care for his children financially.

"This year they'll be getting lots of clothes for Christmas.

"You know it was like a whole new door opened for me when I got this job here. You know how they say you can see light at the end of the tunnel, well it was like I was right there in the middle of the light."

"Other people can do it too, they can make it out of their problem lives. They have to want it. I understand how easy it is to turn to alcohol and drugs to hide their problems of being homeless and on the street. But as long as someone is alive there will always be hope." ♦

Christmas in the Remand Centre could be boring

As this is being written, in early November, "Edward" does not know whether he'll be spending a boring Christmas in the Remand Center or enjoying a few hours of freedom on a temporary pass from the Salvation Army's Anchorage program (an alternative to custody for individuals awaiting trial). One thing's for sure--he doesn't expect Christmas behind bars to be very enjoyable.

Arrested in June and charged with several offenses he claims he did not commit, and unable to make bail, he's been doing "dead time" while he waits to be brought before the courts sometime in the new year. Scant days after his arrest, his wife packed up their possessions and left their apartment for an unknown location within the city. He's seen her twice, and she's indicated she wants no more to do with him. The parishioners of his church (with the exception of the pastor and this writer) do not take advantage of the half-hour visiting privileges he's entitled to every other day. His relatives live elsewhere on the continent. With the exception of the friends he's made "inside" he's virtually alone. He gets to attend chapel

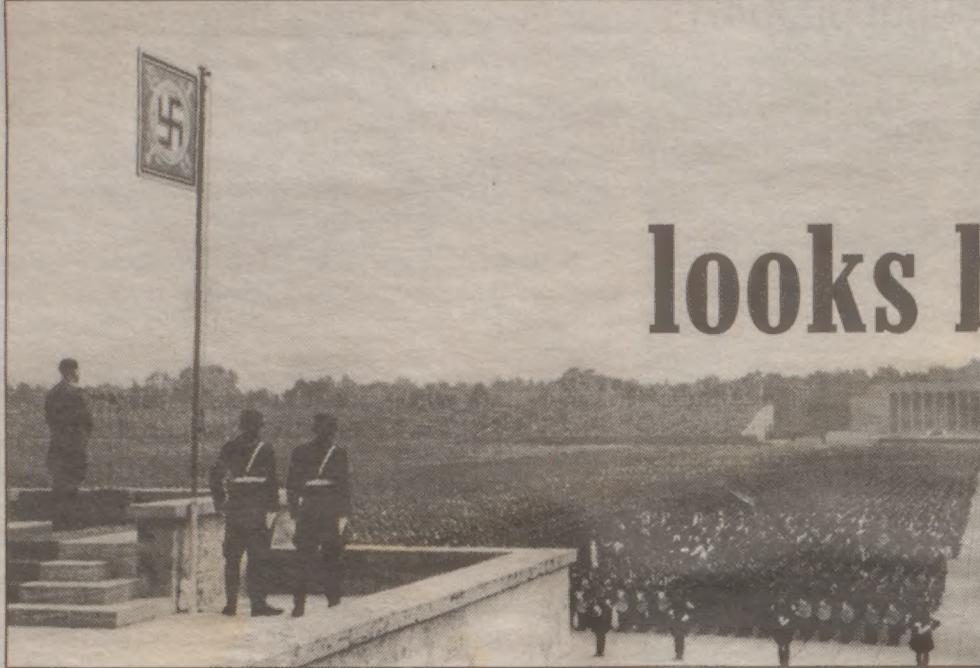
every two to four weeks, as well as a Bible study program every Friday. Once a week he goes to the gym for 45 minutes, and once a month to the outdoor exercise courtyard.

According to some of his friends (one who's been "on remand" for three and a half years), Christmas and other holidays are not much different than ordinary weekends--only two meals are served, "brunch" and dinner. At Thanksgiving, real turkey and all the trimmings were served, a nice change from the "turkey roll" served every third weekend. According to other inmates, real turkey will be served at Christmas (a fact confirmed by Alberta Justice, who added that the inmates will get glazed ham for New Years). But there won't be any gifts from outside--either individuals or organizations--although the system's chaplains will distribute "goodie bags" containing oranges and candy. This "nothing from outside" policy is apparently new, as in the past a variety of church volunteers have been allowed to give out chocolate bars as gifts. Letters and cards from "the outside" will be allowed, and money may be deposited in inmates accounts, as is usual throughout the year. (Note: following the provincial budget cutbacks in the early nineties, inmates are required to purchase "the necessities of life"--soap, deodorant, shampoo and tooth paste--from the canteen. Their accounts aren't just for buying cigarettes and chocolate bars.)

As the Christmas season approaches, various social agencies put on a variety of programs, including caroling, Aboriginal healing circles, video programs, extra game tournaments, and special chapel services. Prizes for the tournaments are purchased from the Inmate Welfare Trust Fund.

But it isn't the same--and can never be--as pulling up to a loving table surrounded by relatives and friends and digging into the traditional Christmas feast, of unwrapping real gifts, of getting up at six a.m. to listen to the Queen's message to the world (yes, it still happens) or building a snowman with his children and grandchildren. For Edward, most of the Christmas season will be spent in the seven by nine foot concrete cubicle he's called home for the past six months, reading for the second or third time one of the well-worn books from the Remand Center's small library--unless he is released to the Salvation Army's program. Lesser men would be climbing the walls by now, but what keeps him going is his new-found faith in God plus his unshakable assertion of his innocence--an innocence he believes will be confirmed by a jury in the distant but foreseeable future. ♦

T. MacHopple



Our Voice looks back at the 1900's

The Greater Push

Tom Murray's 9 of the 1900's

This list isn't complete, nor is it meant to be. It's also flawed in that I've ended up bringing in people who didn't necessarily change things on a mass scale, but fascinated me as people on the fringes, who did things that are only now being understood. It also reveals my lack of ideology, and dislike of dogma. I tried to avoid people like Hitler, who you would think of as an aberration, but his "philosophy", while not as grounded in academia as Milton Friedman, is stunningly pervasive. Sort of like finding out Jim Varney (Earnest goes to Camp) is considered a comedic genius.

Nikolai Lenin (Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov). As leader of the small cadre that overthrew the shaky government of Kerensky in November 1917, Lenin implemented a party of "revolutionary socialist intelligentsia" (i.e. elitist) into power, fusing Nietzschean ideas with traditional socialist humanitarian principles, thus allowing a compassionate political idea to be subverted. In this way, mass murder and genocide

only responsibility was to itself. This lead the way to Reaganomics and Thatcherism (and general selfishness), that eventually sunk into western culture as a way of life. He believed in non intervention as a philosophy, and along with Ronald Reagan, he was notorious for bonehead statements such as "unemployment doesn't matter".

Mohatma Gandhi. He took back his country through methods of civil disobedience, which he learned through Tolstoy and Henry David Thoreau. He had a massive influence through his methods of passive resistance and pacifism, echoed most prominently in Martin Luther King's resistance to racism.

Adolph Hitler. Hitler was armed with a misunderstanding of Nietzsche (and his theories of the Superman), and bolstered by a business class that thought they could use him for their own good, Hitler came to represent all that is despicable in humanity. He propagated a "social Darwinist theory" which still holds surprising credence, and debased intellectual theories in ways that weren't repeated until neo conservatives in America and Alberta copped them. Hitler is the surprise choice for most pervasive social theory in the 20th century.

But in World War Two the Allies drafted almost all breeds of dogs, with the exception of basset hounds, for a variety of dangerous work. Some dogs laid telephone wire, others hauled gun carriages and ammunition, others ratted foxholes. Some dogs were even trained to infiltrate enemy encampments and steal or destroy tactical documents.

During the Middle East crisis, the Hezbollah were reported to have employed bomb-laden kamikaze donkeys. In defence, the Israeli army deployed exploding Dobermanns and Belgian shepherds. The dogs carried dynamite packs into Syrian and Palestinian underground guerrilla hideouts. Once in, the dog was detonated by remote control.

There were definite animal war heroes as well. Daisy, a mascot of a Norwegian merchant ship that was torpedoed in the North Atlantic in 1944, saved many lives. The dog dove into the icy sea with the surviving crewmen and throughout the night swam from man to man, licking their faces to revive them. Since 1945 eight dogs, three horses, thirty-one pigeons and one cat received the highest animal decoration for serving at war: the Dickin Medal for Valour.

Animals have also proven themselves indispensable with being able to sniff out the 'unsavoury element'. Harass, a German shepherd who works with a private detective in Pennsylvania, has supplied crucial evidence in many criminal investigations. In a recent Florida murder case, Harass matched a suspect, via scent, with a washcloth he used to smother an elderly woman. Winston, a Labrador retriever with the British Narcotics Agency, has had so many successful search and seizures that Colombian heroin dealers have a

Gregory Pincus/Margaret Sanger. They worked on early forms of contraceptives. Pincus invented the pill out of worry of the eventual population explosion. Sanger was an early exponent of women taking control of their own bodies.

Emma Goldman. The flip side of Lenin. She was an activist for free speech, women's rights, birth control and the eight hour work day. Also an anarchist of seemingly unimpeachable principles, Goldman never aligned herself with movements that went awry. Rather she just as easily decried the bloodshed in Russia as she did the imperialist nations. Her influence is small, but pervasive, and her humanistic principles grow even more popular amongst dissatisfied groups.

Simone De Beauvoir. She was a proto feminist who would deny being one, clarified many early feminist principles and initiated discussion on the cultural expectations of women in her book the "Second Sex". Was also a prime mover in the existentialist movement along with companion Jean Paul Sartre.

Sigmund Freud. His theories on sexual behavior not only enervated the field of psychiatry, but opened the way for an inquiry into sexual mores and habits that probably did more to revolutionize the way the sexes related to each other, and the way we viewed sex. These theories also became part and parcel of popular culture, from books to film, and even into music and art. ♦

million dollar bounty on his head.

International space programs owe much to animals this century. On November 3, 1957, a two year old, eleven pound Samoyed husky named Laika became the first living creature in orbit. She survived six days until her oxygen ran out. July 2, 1959, another husky, Otvazhnaya, plus a companion and a rabbit were fired up 160 kilometres and returned safely. November 29, 1961, a chimpanzee named Enos orbited the earth three times.

James Thurber once said "If I have any beliefs about immortality, it is that certain dogs I have known will go to heaven, and very, very few persons." Besides the "Lassies" and the "Benjis" of the world who work tirelessly for our entertainment, there are many dogs who selflessly risk everything to save their humans. The most powerful example of this that I'm aware of, in this century, goes to a dog appropriately named King.

King, a German shepherd-husky cross, was always put in the kitchen during the night. Separating the dog from the rest of the Carlson family was a wooden door. One night Howard and Fern Carlson awoke to King barking at them in their bedroom, then they smelled the smoke. As they woke the rest of the family, King stood by and waited until everyone was out of the house. At one point the dog's coat was in flames but he stayed and would not leave until the last person was outside. After the Carlson's watched their house burn to the ground it dawned on them; how did King get to them to wake them up? Howard bent down and inspected the badly burned dog, only to discover his mouth filled with wood splinters. ♦

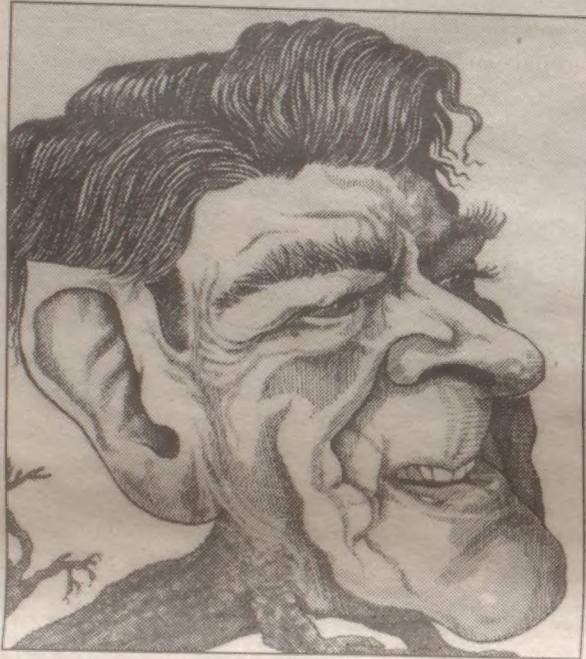


A century gone to the dogs and the donkeys

Dale Ladouceur

My dog gave me the idea for this story. It occurred to me, as I was following my "best friend" to the back door to be let outside, I hadn't heard a single story about the great animals of this century in all of this end of the century hype. So I dedicate this piece to my dog Sagan, who, in Jerome K. Jerome's words, never tells me about my faults, for my own good.

The twentieth century saw an explosion in the use of animals in war. Previously, there had only been horses used to carry soldiers - their traditional role.



5 most influential people of the twentieth century.

Jason Harley

After much careful thought and deliberation, I humbly present a list some may take issue with.

#5- The Catholic Church and, for that matter, most other religious institutions: but mainly the Catholic Church. I realize that this is an organization and not a person but it's hard to pin 2000 years of ignorance, crime and corruption on just one person. Never in the history of man have so few people been able to twist such noble ideals into such bizarre, irrational and backward policies. In the last one hundred years the Catholic Church has contributed mightily to the spread of aids and poverty in the third world. Countless Dictators from all corners of the globe have used religion to inflame populations and justify wars (ie. Hitler, Milosevic, Khomeni). In short, religion discourages rational independent thought: the cornerstone of social justice.

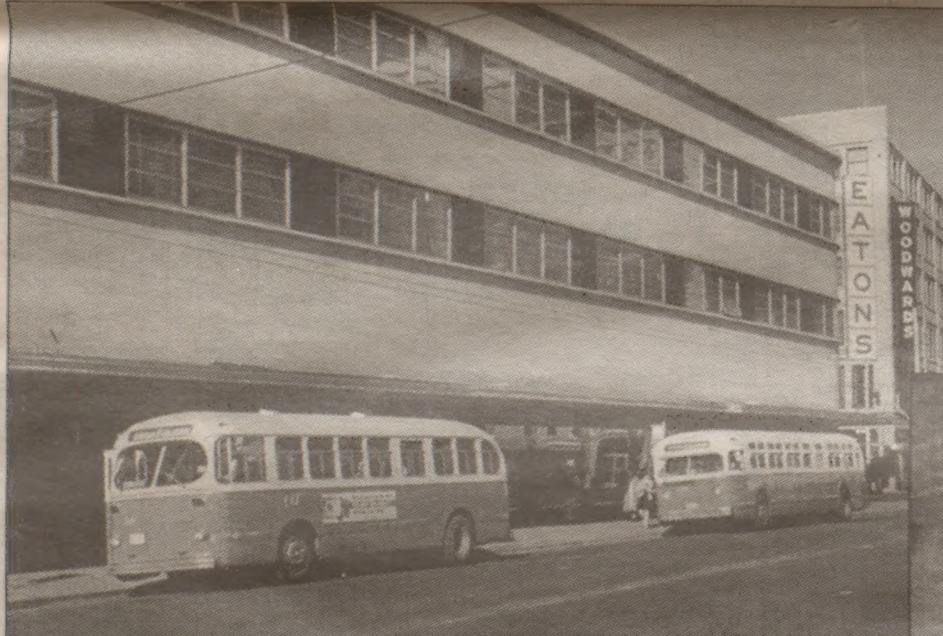
#4- Ronald Regan and Milton Friedman. They tied. It's too hard to determine who the bigger fool is, the guy who thought up supply-side economics or the guy who believed it would work and turned it into a national economic policy. Margaret Thatcher and George Bush could also be tossed on to this scrap heap. It took 250 years to build up a social safety net but only 10 for them to all but tear it down. You almost have to admire that type of efficiency.

#3- The IMF (International Monetary Fund). Another organization, but again, there are too many administrators and corporate devils responsible for the IMF's crimes to list on this page. Over a third of the world's population lives in poverty and despite what their charter says, the IMF is a group dedicated to keeping them there. Canada is an original member and proud sponsor. IMF loans and 'structural adjust-

ments' ensure the north will long remain strong and free while the south languishes indebted and poor.

#2- The Soviet Red Army of WWII. Millions of heroes. Every morning each citizen of Britain, France, and all other Western European nations, should be compelled to bow down, face Russia and thank their citizens for the last fifty years of freedom and independence. In 1939 Adolf Hitler assembled what at the time was unequivocally the strongest army in the history of war. He quickly conquered continental Europe. It is simple fact that Britain, the launching point of the Allies European offensive, would have been the next to fall had it not been for the courage and determination of the Soviet people. An army who just twenty years previous was completely humiliated and trounced, turned itself into a force capable of taking on Hitler. For all of our nationalist pride, when Canada, Britain and particularly the United States, finally got around to joining the fight, much of the dirty work had already been done. For three years the Red Army stood alone and fought with bravery and determination that defies description. By the time we landed at Normandy, the Soviet forces were capable of defeating the Nazis on their own, given time. At the very least, Hitler's forces were divided and weakened. What does all this have to do with social justice? Simple, 1945 was a watershed for western democratic and economic reforms. Women being granted the right to vote, the establishment of workers' unions, and the rise of minority rights movements were but a few offshoots. There is little doubt WWII was the most pivotal political event of the last century.

#1- Dr. Martin Luther King. His words and actions inspired the dreams of millions throughout North America and the world. Gandhi's theory of passive resistance was similar to the teachings of Dr. King. I can only hope, that in my lifetime, another person with the vision, courage and wisdom of Martin Luther King will grace this earth and teach us all how to create something better. ♦



Some have passed on or moved from here. From time to time I'll sit and talk to the old crowd and talk about the old days. At that time we stuck together and helped each other. Some of the people have died of alcoholism, drug abuse, street fighting and



Evolution of the drag

Betty Nordin

The other night I was sitting on my balcony looking at the downtown area, thinking how times have changed since I came to Edmonton in 1974. I came to an area that was called "The Drag".

It was a place that I was told to avoid by some of the new friends I had made in a downtown bar. Jasper Avenue at the time was a very busy place. There was the Yale, Corona and Leland Hotels that I went to quite often. The more I heard of the Drag the more interested I became. I slowly made my way there. At the time there was the Coffee Cup, Queens, Alberta Hotel, New Eddy, Dreamland Theatre and the Riveria Cafe to name a few. I made new friends from this area and today I still see a few of them around.

all the other elements that go with the territory of this area.

As the years went by my friends changed. I changed too. I was no longer afraid of the "Drag". I was living on the drag. I had sunk to the recesses of living on the street. Also the economy had changed. There was no big money to be had. The bottom of the oil barrel had fallen out. People were no longer working in the camps. Times were getting tougher on the streets. The old buildings were being knocked down and ones were being built in their place. I really missed some of the old places. They were places that you could go to and escape from the cold and stay warm. Big and fancy but sterile buildings were put in their place.

Even a new crowd of people were on the street. This crowd was something to be reckoned with. They were more into the drug scene. Signs started to appear on the hotels that were still left standing. Signs such as "No Knives Allowed" made their way into various establishments. Crime was up, welfare was up and the people were pushed further down. More and more soup lines were appearing. The drag was now known as "Inner City".

Today there are a lot of homeless people on the street. Houses of fine grandeur are broken down and unsafe to live in. The souls of people roaming around today are lost.

I still see a few old friends but most are gone. I feel very fortunate to still be around. As I look around I wonder "What will the next era bring?" and "What will happen to the inner City?" It is sad to see an area of the city slowly fade away, that at one time was so interesting. An area that drew me to it at time and now it is an area that pushes people away.

The way it is today maybe we can pitch in and bring life back to the drag as I knew it. It is not a scary place, it is a most interesting place to live in. I look forward to seeing the new changes being made, it is very exciting. The drag or inner city had a great influence on my life. The people were such an influence on me. They helped me to grow to be the person that I try to be today. ♦

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John Diefenbaker

Great politicians of the century ... well there are some

Jim Gurnett

(Strictly assigned to determine five of the great Canadian politicians of the twentieth century.)

First of all, to avoid ulcers and headaches, I'll ignore most of the politicians who operate as if politics is a place to support the agenda of corporate capitalism. My apologies to all who find their heroes in such territory.

Then there is the issue of what geographical area to consider. Without going outside the Edmonton city limits, I can think of many more than five people who have demonstrated politics at its best and been an inspiration and guide to me. They are people like Elmer Roper, Betty & Tony Mardiros, Gordon Wright, Ray Martin, Nellie Peterson and Ivor Dent, people who have been neighbours and teachers and friends.

But for this special occasion I'll wander a little further afield.

Preparing to share some of my heroes, I considered first how easy it is to come up with a very long list of politicians I would like to forget. The first election in which I could vote was the famous Trudeaumania campaign of 1968. There's one man well up on my list of politicians I'd rather forget. His success in replacing the parliamentary tradition with American style individual leadership in Canada, his support of cruise missile testing, the National Energy Program, the War Measures Act... ah yes, Pierre Trudeau. Or there was Maurice Duplessis who gave us a model of patronage, bullying, dirty tricks, riotous personal living and little legislation of any consequence that far too many have practiced ever since. And the name Bennett would certainly end up on my list. There was R. B., prime minister in the Depression years, shipping men off to forced labour camps, and then leaving Canada in a snit when turfed out of office; or W.A.C., and his son Bill in British Columbia, the father and son premiers

who helped pave the way for folks like Bill Vanderzalm. And that's without even pausing at Brian Mulroney or the endless Jean Chretien or our own Alberta premier who illustrates the deKlein of politics....

On to more pleasant territory

Tommy Douglas. Now there is a politician who sets an inspirational standard. The leader of the first socialist government in Canada as premier of Saskatchewan, he combined a brilliant mind and delightful rhetorical skills with a commitment, that owed much to his Baptist minister roots, for putting people first. He is best remembered as the "Father of Medicare". He dared to stand up to the medical establishment, which did everything it could to prevent the introduction of this fair new approach to health care. As a premier he showed that socialist governments could be both creative and fiscally efficient and as the first leader of the NDP he made a major contribution to the development of the party as an important alternative in Canadian politics.

John Diefenbaker. Yes, maybe I have spent my adult life as a dyed-in-the-wool socialist, but I have a secret admiration for the prime minister I came to know watching his amazing speaking performances on grainy black and white television as a young person. The man who gave us the Canadian Bill of Rights, the vanguard of much that has happened in human rights legislation in this country ever since. He was more fun to see in action as a leader of the Opposition than as prime minister. As a politician in opposition myself, I often remembered his advice that "It is the job of the opposition to turn out the government" and that "The Opposition is the detergent of government." He was the prime minister who finally gave First Nations people the vote and who led the Commonwealth in telling South Africa its racist apartheid policies were unacceptable.

David Lewis knew how to turn a phrase. I'll appreciate him forever for giving us the language to describe capitalism as really practiced—"corporate welfare bums". In his long career he did a wonderful job building the link between socialist politics and the labour movement that led to the formation of the NDP, and he used the party's status when it held the balance of power in the House of Commons in the early 70s to get some very progressive legislation passed (like the Foreign Investment Review Board).

It's difficult to resist having J.S. Woodsworth on my list. His is the only photo that hangs on my office wall. But instead I'll put his daughter, Grace MacInnis, on the list. She was the only woman Member of Parliament for many years, but I include her more for the way she was speaking out on issues like the need for government to provide leadership in areas like child care and housing when no one else was talking about them. And for her courage standing up in support of Japanese Canadians when the Canadian government interned thousands during World War II, stealing everything they had and shipping them off to new homes. MacInnis was one of the very few voices to speak up against this despicable action.

My task was to arrive at the five most important politicians to me. One left. Well, I'll make a rule that it must be an elected politician. That means I won't include F.R. Scott, the poet, lawyer and thinker who helped found the League for Socialist Reconstruction and write the Regina Manifesto, one of the most important political statements in Canadian history; or Norman Bethune, the brilliant surgeon who was talking about the economic and social aspects of health decades before anyone else, who lived his beliefs, leaving the comfort of practicing medicine to work in the Spanish Civil War and to die with the people's Red Army in China, honoured for his service by Mao Zedong; or Tim Buck, who helped found the Canadian Communist Party in 1921 and who led the party and went faithfully on for years and years, writing

and talking, refusing to be silenced even when jailed or forced into hiding by a country who felt it was alright to persecute a person for political beliefs.

Rene Levesque is hard to resist. The founder of the Parti Quebecois, I always admired the emotion and sincerity with which he practiced politics, the way he stood his ground in national settings where he was such a lone voice. In a world where politics is so often about slick packaging, he let it all hang out and prac-

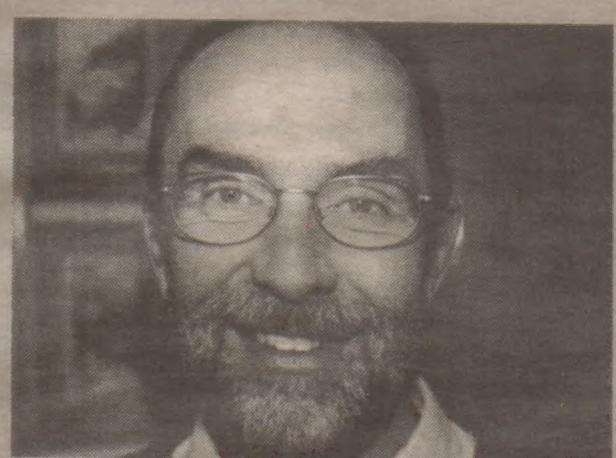


Tommy Douglas - Father of Medicare

ticed politics with his heart on his sleeve. And Audrey McLaughlin is right up there for me too. I came to understand that her importance was more than being the first woman leader of a major political party in North America. She practiced a delightful understanding of politics as being about cooperation, building consensus, empowering the weak. Such a tremendous contrast to the old boys with the endless politics of competition and battle. Thank you Audrey.

The fifth spot still waits. And I want to give it to a politician who has never been elected at the provincial or federal level but who exemplifies all the best qualities of courage, love, vision, and persistence that are needed if politics is to be a place where all the ordinary little folks who would otherwise just be bulldozed over by the rich and powerful in pursuit of their own agendas are to have a chance. My final spot is for Bernard Ominayak, chief of the Lubicon Lake Nation. He is a man who has poured out his life in service to his people, who has had every imaginable assault hurled at him but who has stood his ground on behalf of those who asked him to lead, with a stubborn humility that has my deep admiration.

And so, as I share these names and think of each of these people as I write their names, I am encouraged that politics can be honourable and noble, when those who practice it have a spirit of truth and love and hope. I hope the next century will bring us many more of the same sort of politicians. ♦



Jim Gurnett

Rebecca's Review

Rebecca Lippiatt Long

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." This a line that has been used and overused ever since Charles Dickens first committed the words to paper. However, like all clichés, there is good reason for its use.

Dicken's writing was concerned with the social conditions of his day. He was himself fortunate to escape a life of poverty, having been forced into labour at 12 years of age. He never forgot the inhumanity of indentured labour and wrote, primarily to advocate for social reform, knowing that others lived the life he escaped.

In many ways, the world hasn't changed much since Dickens wrote. Humanity is still burdened by the issues of inequity, poverty, homelessness, and children who don't have enough to eat. There are still those, like Scrooge, who hold money in far higher esteem than human dignity. On the other hand, there seems to be a growing realization that we are all connected; what happens to one of us, affects all of us. When we see children, like Craig Kielburger (the 13-year-old Canadian who shamed Jean Chretien into dealing with the issue of child labour) advocating for other children's well being, it gives us hope. When we hear of a triumph of justice, like the fall of apartheid, we have cause to rejoice.

The end of any era is a time to sum up what one has learned, what to do with that information and decide where to go from here.

It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.

The first decade of the 20th century was a time of technological wonder. The Wright brothers took their first flight and Henry Ford designed the Model T. Both of these events helped shape the course of this century. Beyond the intended use of transportation, it separates the "haves" from the "have-nots." Not only does it enable a person to get to a job, but the type of car someone has says where she or he is on the social scale.

In the second decade, women protested and marched and were thrown in jail, and in Canada, by 1918, were granted the right to vote (although it wasn't until ten years later that women officially became people). Meanwhile, the Americans were barring illiterate immigrants from entering the US and World War I began and ended. The decade ended with the Spanish Flu which killed over 20 million people and the Winnipeg General Strike that killed 2 (97 arrested).

In the 1920's, partially in response to events in Winnipeg, the Canadian government introduced unemployment benefits. They weren't much different from today, being lower than minimum wage, so as not to encourage people to give up their jobs, willy-nilly. Penicillin was discovered in 1928, too late for World War I, but in time for World War II. In 1929, the stock markets crashed around the world, ushering in the depression. Despite the depression, the 1930's started off on two positive notes: Gandhi began his civil disobedience career, tackling the Indian caste system and Amelia Earhart became the first woman to fly

solo across the Atlantic. Things started to head down-hill in Germany when Hitler became Chancellor. Jesse Owens, an African American man, irritated Hitler immensely when he won several golds at the Olympic games, beating out the Aryan athletes.

The 1940's saw some of humanity's darkest and most depraved actions. In Germany, people watched as their neighbours were dragged from their homes onto cattle trucks and trains, never to return. In the US, scientists from across the world made the atomic bomb and unleashed its horror on Japan. In South Africa, the government expanded on the concept of the reservation system to create apartheid. The two bright spots of this decade were the creation of

Alcoholics Anonymous and Gandhi's use of nonviolent, noncooperation to gain India's independence from Britain. After two thousand years, Jewish people finally got to go home; unfortunately, the Palestinians who had lived there in the meantime got pushed out.



In popular culture the 1950's are seen as a time of peace and prosperity. Apparently the world was reeling from the introduction of psychotropic drugs and didn't notice the Korean war or Joseph McCarthy rounding up the "commies" in the US state department. Rosa Parks started the American Civil Rights movement when she refused to move to the back of the bus and Fidel Castro left American baseball to lead the Cuban revolution.

In 1960, Native Canadians finally gained the right to vote. (Perhaps that is why some white people get confused and think they were here first?) Rachel Carson challenged propaganda regarding the safety of chemicals and wrote Silent Spring. In Washington, D.C. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous speech beginning, "I have a dream." In 1965, African

Americans gained their right to vote, Canadians got a national health plan and the maple leaf was introduced as the Canadian flag. Meanwhile, the Americans weren't content to stay at home, so invaded Cuba, trying to oust Castro, assisted the Bolivians in killing his comrade, Che Guevara, invaded Vietnam and, after testing the effects on small animals, invaded outer space. The decade ended with a bang at Woodstock.

The 1970's were ushered in with war protests. In 1973, Wounded Knee was taken back by Native Americans, much to the chagrin of the American government. Two years later, Leonard Peltier, a leader in the American Indian Movement, was framed for the murder of two FBI agents. Peltier was traveling in Canada, so the FBI used perjured testimony to obtain his extradition to the US. (He is still in jail despite the government acknowledging they may have been wrong.) In 1979, people realized nuclear power may not be so safe when Three Mile Island experienced a reactor meltdown; that same year, Mother Theresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The 1980's wins the prize for chemical accidents. Canada blamed massive fish kills on acid rain created by US factories, a gas leak in an Indian chemical plant killed more than three thousand people, scientists noticed the hole in the ozone layer and the accident at Chernobyl killed thousands and maimed thousands more. To top off the decade, the Exxon Valdez slammed into the Alaskan coast. Politically, things were looking up with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the beginning of the end of the Cold war. In Canada, the Mohawk Nation flexed their muscles at Oka, and a 14-year-old woman was stabbed by a Canadian soldier with a bayonet.

The nineties out with Nelson Mandela being freed after 26 years in prison. The next year saw the official end of apartheid and later the first free elections in half a century. The elected government did the honorable thing, and rather than whooping the white men's butts, set up the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. They by no means exonerated people involved in apartheid, but also recognized violence was done by both sides. The Soviet Union dissolved into its member countries and after years of lust after Levis, people finally recognized capitalism was not the panacea it proposed to be.

In the 20th century we have witnessed such diametrically opposed events as smallpox being eradicated from the planet and the mushrooming spread of AIDS. We have seen nuns, like Mother Theresa, whose selflessness goes beyond words, and others who beat children mercilessly, scarring them for life.

Perhaps, at the end of this millennium, we have reached a junction, a crossroads in human history. We have at our hands tools capable of changing the world, for the better or worse. Tools like computers and the Internet can provide us with a place for communication unparalleled by anything else in history. We can use this tool as just another marketplace, where we can buy and sell even more goods no one really needs, or we can use it as a place where people can communicate from around the world, sharing ideas and learning that despite religion or race, politics or ideals, we are not so different from one another. ♦

Humans versus cars in the inner city

Natashe Robertson

Reg is angry. "That's three times this damn week people have been hit in crosswalks." The long time resident of Boyle McCauley shows the strain of waiting and worrying. His friend Lucky, the latest victim in the grim and quiet battle between cars and pedestrians, is in the Intensive Care Unit at the Royal Alex

Hospital fighting for her life. A car struck her at 7:35 the night before, November 23, on the corner of 96 St. and 105 Ave., while on her way home from the International Hotel.

The frustration Reg feels is shared by many area residents and the staff of the Bissell Centre, an inner city organization whose front windows look out on to the street where the accident occurred. Bobby King, receptionist at the Centre, a woman whose position gives her ample insight into the lives and troubles of people in the area, feels that "the lives of people down here don't hold as much value as elsewhere in

the city." Reg agrees and while he places some responsibility with the police department - "they aren't charging the drivers going through the crosswalks", others blame both the lack of signage and a failure of the larger community to understand the culture of the area.

Anne Daly and Carol McPherson, ECSS workers at Bissell Centre, agree when suggesting solutions. "They should lower the speed limit to 30 km and post large signs reminding drivers they are in a residential area.

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Folkways made headways

Message in the music

Ele Gibson

Activists have fought for many important issues of social justice by speaking at rallies, holding demonstrations and writing articles and literature during the last century. The problem with these forms of communication is that they tend to speak to the previously converted. The message has been carried to many, many more through music. Music, more than any other communication medium, has transcended this boundary and spoken to people who would never have otherwise considered the issues contained in the lyrics.

Issues of social, political and environmental injustice are included in all forms of music from traditional music, through folk and country, to pop, rock, reggae and punk. Unlike speeches and rallies, the message of music reaches the ears of the unconverted. People listen to hear the music they enjoy, but are often exposed to lyrics that will change the course of their lives and the lives of others. My first experience of this was in my early teens, listening to Pete Seeger singing "Little Boxes". It had a profound impact on me and began to make me question the traditional middle-class values I was being raised with. Would I be working in a community agency today if I had not listened to it - who knows?

The strength of the message of dissent through song has been recognized by those in power and has often been silenced. The Weavers, for example, were rendered voiceless during the McCarthy era. On the other hand, many songs, such as "We Shall Overcome", "We Shall not be Moved" and "Joe Hill", have been used as rallying cries for movements of freedom and justice. Many have been prepared to risk incarceration as a price for singing out.

Cries of dissent for social justice for minority groups began with the slave trade, and continued through the farmers' plight and the fight for workers rights during the Thirties. All had the same theme - equality and fair treatment.

The traditional song about the Underground Railroad, the network for relocating slaves from the Southern States, was modified by John McCutcheon to include other minority groups of recent decades such as people from Chile, San Salvador and Brazil. Modern civil rights issues were written about in such songs as "Biko". Most of you will remember when "Sun City" spoke out against apartheid and became a chart topper. In this song, Artists United Against Apartheid rose up to encourage fellow musicians from playing concerts in white South Africa until apartheid was ended. This was seen as one of the factors in uniting opinion against the established South African regime and resulting in the freeing of Nelson Mandela.

The unfair treatment of the American Indian, the "stealing" of their land and the destruction of their native way of life is sung about in Aboriginal singer, Buffy Sainte Marie's "Now That the Buffalo's Gone",

while the plight of Native Americans trapped in the unforgiving urban environment is poignantly described in Neil Young's "Pocahontas".

White Americans are not without their trials. The struggles of farmers in the Depression were portrayed by Woody Guthrie in a constant stream of songs. "Pastures of Plenty", for example, describes the hard life of an itinerant farm labourer, the life followed by many during those hard times. Lee Hays of the Weavers wrote about the farmers in the Fifties in "Times A-Gettin' Harder", and Stan Rogers shows that modern farming life is no easier in "The Field Behind the Plow". Living on the land remains a tough and lonely way to raise and feed a family.



On a parallel track, music about hardships among factory workers, and the struggles of the unions for fair wages and decent working conditions had traditional roots in such songs as "The Work of the Weavers", a British import. In 1911, Joe Hill wrote a union version of "Casey Jones", and when he was killed by union busters, a song was written about his fight for workers' rights. Woody Guthrie, the father of folk music and a strong union supporter, wrote many songs on this subject, such as the famous "Union Maid". Woody and many other singers have been known to show their support of workers' rights by singing at rallies and during strikes. The misuse and even abuse of immigrant Mexican labour, described in Woody Guthrie's "Deportees", continues today.

During the 1960's, war and its effect on people was often the main focus of songs of protest. The Vietnam War and its futility inspired a whole generation of music that fueled the anti-war movement in North America. Country Joe and the Fish asked "What are we

(continued from page 11)

Jim Gurnett, Community Services Manager at Bissell and a resident of Sherwood Park, makes this comparison between the two communities, "In Sherwood Park, whenever there is a problem with too many people speeding on a particular road, large signs, big enough that they catch your eye, are put up warning drivers they are in a residential area."

Ele Gibson, Bissell employee and area resident, was involved in the Area Redevelopment Plan. "A great deal has been done already to slow down traffic," she says, referring to the four-way stop sign at 96 St. and 105A Ave. and the boulevards on 107A Ave. at the 96 St. intersection, but she also sees a need for an increased understanding of the unique culture of the

area. "People should be taking as much care here as they would in an area where there are children."

There's a lot of foot traffic and a lot of people who aren't as aware of vehicle traffic, because they don't drive. They think of the street as their home, and for some of them it is ... crossing the street is like crossing the hall between your kitchen and your living room."

Meanwhile Lucky's friends wait and pray. It is impossible to mention her name without hearing stories of her great spirit and generosity. She is a tiny woman with "a heart as big as all outdoors." No stranger to poverty herself, "she helps out everyone down here," friends say. "If she has it, she will share it." One friend laughs as he tells the story of how, recently, she let a couple that had no place to stay

Fighting For?" while Pete Seeger questioned the quality of military leadership in "Waist Deep in the Big Muddy". The futility and price of war can be heard in "Where Have all the Flowers Gone", and the effects on those left behind in Steve Goodman's "Penny Evans" and Roger Miller's "Ruby, Don't Take Your Love to Town". Later we learn we are facing the potential of nuclear war, and Barry MacGuire, a former New Christie minstrel, growls out that we are "On the Eve of Destruction".

In the 70's and 80's, songs about marginalized people became more prevalent. A feeling grew that rich Western societies had an obligation to take care of people who lacked the skills and resources needed in the modern age. Ralph McTell sang about the poor and the old in the city of London, and Phil Ochs wrote a song made famous by Joan Baez, which told us that "There but for Fortune Go You or I." Nancy Griffith talked about the difficulty of breaking out of poverty because she was "Just a Bank Account Away From America". People became more aware of the abilities of people with disabilities and songs such as "It's What You Do with What You've Got" by Scottish musician, Brian McNeill, were born.

Concern about the deterioration of the environment has been growing for the past few decades. Loss of rain forests was a cause taken up by many songwriters, such as the Wyrd Sisters, who wrote about Clayoquot Sound and Bruce Cockburn who asked if we would hear "If a Tree Falls in the Forest". Midnight Oil constantly sang at environmental rallies to inspire protesters, even when it seemed no-one else was paying attention. The quality of water, particularly the Hudson River, was a cause close to Pete Seeger's heart and he wrote several songs about it. Even the Texan Austin Lounge Lizards have a song on one of their albums called "Acid Rain Keep on Falling" that talks about dead fish floating by on one of New York State's Finger Lakes.

Music covers a wide range of issues of justice and encompasses all types of music: from well known standards such as "This Land is my Land", to country songs like "Quarter Moon" by Kathy Mattea, from chart toppers such as "Give Peace a Chance", to rock favourites like Bruce Springsteen's "My Home Town", and to the reggae beat of Peter Tosh's "Fight On". Some efforts even span the generations - Britain's Billy Bragg recently set to music poems written many decades ago by Woody Guthrie in his album "Mermaid Avenue".

How much different would the fight for social justice have been if we had not had these songs to inspire us, to listen to and for us to sing? How many fewer people would have become involved if "Universal Soldier", "From a Distance" and "If I had a Hammer" had never been heard? "The answer, my friends, is blowin' in the wind - the answer is blowin' in the wind". ♦

Ele Gibson is a Manager at Bissell Centre in Edmonton's inner city and is an ardent and dedicated Folk Festival volunteer.

spend the night in her home. "They trashed her place and she said to me, 'I don't think I'll do that again.' But that's just the way she is."

Ten minutes before the accident she was talking with friends at the International. "She borrowed a smoke, then headed for home. Next thing you know, someone came running in saying a woman had been hit and they didn't know her name. It was Lucky." Her small stature and age, 55, plus the extent of her injuries, a broken pelvis, two broken legs, and head injuries, are cause for serious concern, but her friends hope and pray that the strength of her heart and spirit will pull her through.



THE LITTLE SQUEEGEE KID

Rodney Graham

The cold wind tore at the exposed skin of the squeegee kid as she sat huddled in a half fetal position on the cement in front of Eaton's Department Store

on Portage Avenue. She sat on top of her few belongings - a small backpack and a blanket. She held a little plastic bag containing new lighters she had bought from a marketing company downtown. A metro bus came hurtling past and she turned her head to avoid the blast of icy wind that swished across her small frame. "Would you like to buy a lighter...help me get home...please?" No one had bought one lighter. She had been sitting there since 9 A.M. it was now 5 P.M. It was New Years Eve and everyone was too busy to bother with a street person. They had important matters to deal with. She had slept under a bridge the night before. She hadn't been able to find any other young people to stay with because she was new in town. Social Services wouldn't help her with lodgings because she refused to be "processed" (give information about herself), she feared being sent home to Nova Scotia, where abuse awaited - or worse - one of those scary group homes. The city had made it illegal to squeegee. Her boyfriend had left her. Something that often happens in relationships where money and the future is bleak...love dwindles...friction builds. The aroma of freshly baked turkey from an upscale night spot wafted in the air. Gourmet cappuccino wafted past. She wondered if she should spend her last two bucks on a cup of regular coffee. The light from the fading sun sent ghostly shimmering up and down the rising skyscrapers. They surrounded her like heartless sentinels of Hades. 'Got to keep warm,' she thought. She flicked a lighter and held it in her palms. She was getting very tired now. Her bloodshot eyes fell closed.

She was sitting in front of a large fireplace.

Stockings were hanging from its sides. The warmth embraced her. Stretching her feet towards the fireplace to warm them she suddenly found herself back on cold cement on Portage Avenue... She flicked a lighter again. This time she was standing in front of a tall Christmas tree. It had thousands of coloured lights. It was warm and cozy there. Christmas music filled the room. She awoke again. It was dark on the street. There was no one to be seen. Snow was falling gently. But it was so cold she began to shiver violently. Lighting the lighter again she was transported to the living room of her grandmother in Halifax. Before her stood her grandmother, holding a tray of steaming cookies. "Have a cookie," her grandmother said sweetly. Suddenly she was looking at the stark dark street - shivering uncontrollably... Hurriedly lighting two lighters, one in each hand, she was transported back to her grandmother's living room. "Grandmother!" she yelled, "Don't disappear! I don't want to go back again!" In the harsh morning light she sat in a fetal position. A lighter was clutched in each hand. Her eyes were open. Staring at something wonderful. A smile was frozen on her pretty face. Her blond hair hung like frozen icicles across her young face. "She must have been trying to warm herself." A policeman said to his partner. Call the coroners office...we'll have to notify the next of kin." "I wonder what she was looking at," said the policewoman in response, shaking her head in empathy. No one knew of the beautiful visions she had seen. Neither did they know in what a glorious manner she had taken flight into the wonder of the New Year. ♦



The new freight train hoppers

Rodney Graham

It's a warm summer morning. The clanking of trains being hitched fills the still air in the massive train yard in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Three young people laden with backpacks emerge from the clump of bushes where they've been hiding. They head for a slowly moving train they had scouted out and they run along side of it.

One of them comes along a freight car with ITT's door open. He deftly hoists his backpack inside and then grasps the handle throwing himself up and inside. The others follow. It takes about one minute from when they'd started in the bushes.

"I'll e-mail you as soon we get to Wisconsin," yells Nathan. The others wave and then disappear inside.

The train gathers speed. Soon it is traveling at over 45 M.P.H. heading south. Freight cars; grain cars and flat beds. It's a "hotshot" (through train); it probably won't stop for a few States at least.

Suzy and Chris are 18 years old and Nathan is 23. They are a new breed of train hoppers. They are activists and have just been visiting the North American Food not Bombs annual convention. They are not "typical" train hoppers but nowadays there is no "typical" train hopper.

Young people are now finding train hopping a welcome alternative to hitchhiking popular in the 60s and 70s. The danger of riding with strangers is one reason people opt for the trains. The freedom and adventure are other reasons.

According to the three American youth, train riding is easy but can be dangerous. The best type of train to hop is a freight car, a grain car, or a flatbed.

"Make sure the door doesn't slam shut if you're on a freighter though," says Nathan, "you could suffocate."

"Make sure you have lots of water," he continued, "and a train map." (A map showing train routes in North America).

Another danger is getting lost: Freight trains (and other non-passenger trains) do not run on schedule - they run on tonnage. When they get enough tonnage to move - they depart. There is no regular pattern. A train crew can only work for a maximum of 12 hours, then the train is parked and a fresh crew called in. That could take hours - or days. Switching trains then will be your only alternative and getting on the wrong train is a real possibility.

The old hobo and the new train hoppers

The old "hobo" who ran the rails for a good part of a century is vanishing fast and is being replaced with "yoho's" (people, according to hoboes who are merely thrill seekers), and the youth who would probably otherwise hitchhike.

"Hobo" as defined by Wordsworth's 'dictionary of the underworld' p 336. Pictures a hobo as someone who wanders and works, where as a tramp wanders and dreams. The origin is obscure. Historical scholars propose that 'homeward bound soldiers' after the civil war were the first genre of train hoppers. Cowboys and farm workers were to follow. The term "hobo" may have several origins: It may come from the Latin, 'hobo bonus' that means, "good man"; another possibility is {hoe boy}, slang for farm worker - which many hoboes were.

End of an era; or new beginning?

In the thirties riding the rails reached its peak because of the depression. Thousands rode the rails - even families. Now laws are being enforced. It is a \$50 to \$100 fine - or more if caught. Gone are the days of the free booting, mischievous, good-natured hobo. The National Hobo Association is discontinuing its paper "Hobo Times" and there is talk of there not being enough "real hoboes" to justify an association. A criminal element has entered the scene, hobo affectionadoes view young radicals with disdain, and some say that few people under 60 even know the truth about hobo culture.

In a world where unity is at a premium, trust and solidarity are hard to come by, perhaps only a miracle can save a forgotten, romantic, free lifestyle...

But riding the rails has not vanished yet - it's still rollin' on. ♦

Oilers giving back to Edmonton

Jason Harley

The Edmonton Oilers have a long history of being active in the city. In keeping with this month's focus on the helping community, I sat down with three of the team's busiest volunteers: Doug Weight, Todd Merchant and Bill Guerin.

Doug Weight is entering his third year with the Cross Cancer Institute. Growing up, Doug witnessed first-hand the pain and suffering cancer brings to a victim and family, as his cousin battled the illness. He promised himself if he were ever in a position to ease the burden on those undergoing cancer treatment he would. Three years ago he bought a skybox at the Coliseum and established Weight's World. It is an opportunity for children with cancer and children with parents fighting cancer to escape for a night and forget the incredible trials of their everyday lives. Doug and his wife make a point of spending time with the children and visit them in the hospital as often as possible. Doug is also present at numerous Cross Cancer fundraising events and volunteer appreciation nights. For Doug, the spirit of volunteerism and community involvement started at home. Raised Catholic, his parents instilled in him a healthy dose of family values and moral obligation. Doug strongly believes it is important for all parents to take the time to teach their children the importance of respect and community.

Todd Merchant started with the Christmas Bureau three years ago. The Oilers have long been affiliated with the charity and Todd was thrilled by the opportunity to continue the legacy. The Bureau's biggest need is fundraising and this is where Todd is incredibly active. He attends every key event and always with an

enthusiasm that both shocks and impresses Bureau staff. Todd credits his wife's continued and varied work in the community with inspiring him to volunteer.

Bill Guerin has spent a little more than a year working with the Kid's Kottage. While in New Jersey he was active with the United Way and from the first day he arrived in Edmonton, Bill looked for a way to get involved. Bill donates money to the Kottage for every point he scores and participates in all major fundraising campaigns. Bill feels obliged to give back because of all the good fortune he has had and because he, along with the rest of the Oilers, are in a position where a little means a lot.

Many may feel these volunteer efforts are nothing special. Perhaps people who make as much money as they do should give back and give back more than these three are. The fact remains no one is obliged to volunteer. Many wealthy members of our community do nothing at all. The actions of Weight, Merchant and Guerin should be applauded. From meeting with them I assert each would humbly agree they are merely small players in a larger performance and are only more than happy to play their parts. Our Voice would like to thank all those who work to make our community a better place. ♦



Doug Weight



Todd Merchant

If anyone is interested in becoming a volunteer please contact the Volunteer Centre located at: #302, 11456 Jasper ave., 483-6431. People are always needed.

Twelve Days of Christmas

The real story

Ron Murdock

I was thinking about what would happen if the twelve days of Christmas were taken literally and someone actually sent all those gifts to another person. What would the recipients head be like after the twelfth day? Here is my version of what would happen.

Letter #1 - 12/13/99 -

Dear Ron:

I just wanted to send a note thanking you for the splendid carving of a partridge in a pear tree. It looks good on the coffee table.

Love Karen.

Letter #2 - 12/14/99 -

Hello Ron:

What a surprise this morning when the courier delivered the two turtle doves. Hearing them cooing in their cage is quite soothing. Have a good Christmas, Ron and all the best in the new year.

Love again, Karen.

Letter #3 - 12/15/99 -

My God, Ron:

Aren't you the extravagant one. A friend of mine brought over 3 French hens, saying they were from you. You don't have to go to all this expense and trouble for me.

Have a cool yule this year, Karen.

Letter #4 - 12/16/99 -

Greetings Ron:

When I got home this afternoon, I found 4 calling

birds on the back porch. This has got to stop. It is getting a tad bit noisy around here with the 9 birds.

Cheers: Karen.

Letter #5 - 12/17/99 -

Dearest Ron:

I must really thank you from the bottom of my heart for the 5 golden rings. The rings are a gift I can really use. This is much better than the last couple of gifts.

Thanks again, Karen.

Letter #6 - 12/18/99 -

Ron:

Back to the birds are we? Look you are really going too far. For 6 days now, you have sent a gift over and quite frankly enough is enough. Stop it now as the neighbours are complaining about the noise. I know it is better to give than to receive but you have done more than your fair share of it. At least with the 6 geese a laying, I'll have plenty of eggs for the morning. No more presents please!

As ever, Karen.

Letter #7 - 12/19/99 -

Look Ron, what is with the 7 swans swimming in the wading pool? I really don't need this. You are testing our friendship to the umpteenth degree. 22 god-damned birds is enough already. The noise is keeping me up and the neighbours are getting more hostile than ever. Quit it!

Karen:

Letter #8 - 12/20/99 -

Assface!

I get home and what do I find but 8 maids milking cows. As if all those birds aren't enough but 8 cows on top of it? Cut it out you asshole and stay the hell away from me you prick.

Karen.

Letter #9 - 12/21/99

Hey Shithead:

Just can't quit can you? I now have 9 ladies dancing around the bloody place. Along with that the 8 cows have developed a severe case of diarrhea. Shit is being tracked all over the place. My backyard is now a lake of shit and the neighbours are getting a petition together to get me out of the area. Get a life.

Karen.

Letter #10 - 12/22/99 -

OK Numb nuts: You've won the battle, so lay off. As a result of the 10 lords a leaping, the landlord is evicting me. Bird shit, and cow dung all over the damn place. When the lords a leaping quit going at the maids and dancing ladies, they are committing unspeakable acts on the cows. If I see your face again, I will alter it beyond recognition. Karen.

Letter #11 - 12/23/99 -

You rotten damned swine: This is war. Since you have the balls to send 11 pipers piping to my house at 4 a.m. I am going to find you. Once I do that, I will shoot you on sight. It will be worth doing the jail time.

Your sworn enemy, Karen.

Letter #12 - 12/24/99 -

Dear Mr. Murdock: As a result of your present of 12 drummers drumming, Ms. Karen DeMong has suffered a total nervous breakdown. Ms. DeMong will be requiring our care for quite some time and is now under heavy sedation. We have taken the trouble of placing a restraining order on you, so please do not attempt to reach Ms. DeMong under any circumstances.

R. Grady of the Shady Grove Mental Health Facility.

From Siberia to Edmonton for Christmas

Linda Dumont

A family of Siberian immigrants, will soon be experiencing their first Christmas with Santa Claus and all the trimmings. The Medin family lived through the sweeping changes in Russia when the communist government lost power. Now they are adjusting to life in Canada.

Alexander Medin, his wife Elaina and three daughters, Marina, 13, Kate, 12 and Natasha, 11, are landed immigrants who arrived at the Edmonton International Airport July, 1999 from Omsk, Siberia. They brought with them only 10 pieces of luggage.

"We are looking for a better way of life," said Alexander Medin, who worked for Proctor and Gamble in Siberia in the field of research and technology. Because of economic conditions in Russia now, many technical people, like Medin, no longer have an opportunity to work. He is hoping to be able to use his skills here. Until he is able to find work, the family is living on the money they saved to come to Canada.

As landed immigrants, the Medins can stay in Canada four years, then apply for citizenship.

The girls learned English as a second language in Siberia, and are continuing to learn more English in school. Marina is trying very hard to keep up with the ~~rest of the family, taking English as a Second Language (ESL) classes daily at Northwest College. She is also trying to learn the Canadian customs.~~

Marina thought Halloween was one of the most interesting holidays. She and the girls dressed in costumes, and even visited a haunted house at Fort Edmonton Park to experience Halloween chills.



The second fall holiday, Russian Revolution Day, is still an official holiday, but has lost popularity since the change in government ten years ago. Only a few hundred communists still celebrate it.

Alexander said people don't want to celebrate Revolution Day because millions of people suffered. Nearly every family in Russia had some member sent to the prison camps in Siberia during the Russian Communist rule.

"Our family as well," Alexander said. "My grandfather was arrested for talking. He just told something to someone, and he was sent to northern Siberia. He was assigned 25 years but when Stalin died in 1956, he was released. He spent only four years in the prison camp.

"We made a jack-o-lantern. It's the first time," she said. Both Halloween and Thanksgiving were not celebrated in Siberia.

Instead, there are two fall holidays which Canadians don't celebrate. September 1 is the first day of school regardless of what day of the week it falls on, and November 17 is Russian Revolution Day.

"Many parents go to school on the first of September and there is a special meeting with the principals and teachers. There are speeches on how you spent the summer," said Alexander.

"With the Communists it (Revolution Day) was a huge celebration," he said. "Traffic stopped on the streets. There were red flags and a holiday march through the city."

Because the communist party did not recognize Christmas, the big holiday in Russia is New Years Day.

"On New Years every family prepares celebration meals and meets together in someone's home," Alexander said, "At midnight everyone raises glasses of champagne. There is lots of food and delicacies. Then everyone goes to the parks where there are music and fireworks, shouting and dancing on the streets."

The New Year is celebrated all night.

Instead of Santa Claus, Grandfather Frost hosts special celebrations for children during the New Year holiday from school. There are special New Year tree celebrations where the children dance around the tree and Grandfather Frost, with his granddaughters, the Snow Girls, entertains them with games, singing and dancing.

"Before ten years ago, when the reform began, people worked on Christmas just like any other day. Only a few old people went to church," said Alexander. Since then, Christmas has been declared a state holiday that falls on January 7.

The Medin family have not really had time to think about Christmas yet. They have had to make many adjustments to living in Edmonton since a friend met them at the International Airport last summer. For the first two months, they rented a furnished suite, then moved into an apartment in Jasper Place.

Parents from their daughters' school donated all of the furnishing they needed, as well as housewares. One woman even gave them a hand made cloth wall hanging.

"We're very cautious about spending money because I hope to get work soon," said Alexander. "But I have to contemplate the worst case scenario." ♦

The Age of Miracles is still with us. The story of a man called Michael

Ron Murdock

At the end of September, 1999, Michael came out of a 5 day blackout. Around his bed were 100 empty beer cans. The landlord was hammering at the door with a second eviction notice. Two months worth of rent had not been paid. It was all spent on cocaine. The wife was gone, having taken her belongings in the process.

The day Michael hit the streets, it was snowing heavily and freezing. At the end of an 8 month relapse involving alcohol and cocaine, Michael had no where to go and had only \$5.47 and his bank account. All he had with him was a change of clothes and a case of beer. After entering the George Spady Detox Centre, Michael was able to keep the clothes but staff kept the beer. For the first 5 days Michael went through hell by experiencing the DT's for the first time in 25 years. After leaving the detox Michael was suicidal. He was facing a life with no job, no money, no home, no sober friends, no prospects and no hope.

For the first two weeks of being clean and sober, Michael was homeless. At night he slept on mats at both the George Spady Detox Centre and Herb

Jamieson Centre. Nothing was provided in the way of a pillow, sheets or blankets.

"If I thought this was hard when I was drunk it was sure harder when I was sober," says Michael.

A turning point in Michael's life was when he saw a poster about Our Voice in the George Spady Centre. At the Our Voice office, Michael got his vendor ID tags and a few of the papers to sell on the street. Since Michael started to help himself, the gifts have started to roll in including clothes, a TV, radio and kitchenware. In two weeks of selling Our Voice, Michael earned enough money to rent a small room of his own.

"I'm ecstatic to walk into a place of my own, shower and shave at my own leisure and do the things most take for granted," he says.

During this period Michael was in court for charges of car theft, mischief, breach of probation and failing to comply. Thinking for sure he was heading to jail, Michael pleaded guilty to mischief. By the grace of God the rest of the charges were dropped.

To help get started in his new residence, Michael was given a clothing voucher by the Bissell Centre to stock up on winter clothes. The Mustard Seed supplied Michael with enough groceries to stock the fridge. Along with attending regular AA, NA and CA 12 step meetings, Michael returned to his church, where he is involved with weekly Bible studies, Thursday Eucharist and Sunday Services. Every morning Michael asks God for guidance during the day and thanks God every night for help received. As the days go by, Michael is becoming more self sufficient and becoming a responsible member of society.

Diagnosed with Stage 4 hepatitis, Michael was also recently told he had 2 months to live. Six months have passed since that date and Michael is still with us and going strong.

Just recently Michael has been diagnosed with HIV and is coping with it amazingly well. He finds it is not a reason to relapse back into drugs or alcohol but has the strength that sobriety has given him to cope with it.

Michael would like to extend his heart felt gratitude to those who helped in his struggle to recover from addiction. They are the priests and congregation at All Saints' Cathedral, George Spady Centre, Herb Jamieson Centre, Our Voice Magazine, the Bissell Centre, David M of Enigma Hair Group and to the friends who stuck with him through thick and thin and mostly his God.

poems

Old Friends

I haven't been around now for sometime.
 Been sitting in jail and I just got out.
 Goin' to take a stroll on the street
 to see who's around and who ain't.
 Lots of new faces and the same old faces around.
 Wonder where some of my old friends are today.
 These's a couple of faces I recognize.
 It's sure good to see them
 now that I'm home again on the street.
 Old friends are a welcome sight to see.
 Now a days it's hard to come by old friends,
 They are the ones that you can talk to
 and know that they'll keep it to themselves.
 It sure is good to stroll around the street
 and see old friends again.

Betty Nordin

Betty won the "Old Friends" Category sponsored by the Bissell Centre at last October's Songs of the Street Poetry Night.

The Flu

The flu sucks
 I hate it.
 It makes me want to cry.
 Damn.

Michael Walters

Michael won nothing for this poem.

The Drunk Driver

When my heart stopped beating
 In the winter of 78,
 it was due to a drunk driver.
 We both swerved, but it was too late.

I was married to a beautiful lady.
 Our daughters were seven and two.
 He was on the wrong side
 driving without a clue.

I watch over my family now
 from heaven above
 I miss them so much
 We lived a life of family love.

Sorry that driver
 The drunk driver tore my family apart.
 In fact, he's that man
 I love him with all my heart.

At heaven's gate I was asked to be his guardian angel
 I said yes, I would be proud and glad,
 to watch over the drunk driver
 The drunk driver...my Dad!

Travis Awakening Bear

Travis won "The Stories we Never Tell" category sponsored by the Boyle McCauley News.



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Allison Kydd

(Hope has her evening out with blue-eyed Donald. When he asks her to go home with him, that too seems like a dream come true, until she has to confront Kenny's jealousy the next day. She manages not to let him bully her, but it's a short-lived victory. Just when things seemed to be so right, everything starts to go wrong again.)

Hope got to work almost forty minutes late and found that Claire had changed her mind. Instead of giving her a last chance, she gave her two week's notice. "This just hasn't worked out," was how she put it. She went on about how Hope needed time to get her life together, that being a parent and holding down a job was too much for her right now. Hope was stunned, but relieved at the same time. No need to worry anymore about when the other shoe would fall; it had fallen.

Later, she saw how Claire managed to have it both ways, both firing her and pretending she was doing her a favour. At the time, however, she was too choked up to speak or think very clearly. She accepted a Kleenex and Claire's offer to let her work in the storeroom until she, as Claire put it, "had herself in hand."

After an hour and three trips to the staff washroom to mop up her tears and blow her nose, Hope figured she couldn't put off facing the public anymore. Unfortunately, the first thing Stephen said to her was, "Your friend was here; the Thomas Mann fellow."

That seemed the worst of all, the fact she'd missed seeing Donald. She might never see him walk in that door again! More tears welled up.

"Better pull yourself together," said Stephen, "maybe it's not the end of the world."

"Why didn't you tell me he was here?" she sputtered.

"I was talking about the job," said Stephen sarcastically. "Besides, he didn't ask for you."

Stung and not understanding what she'd done to offend him, Hope felt more alone. But somehow she had to get through the day. Later she'd have to figure out how to support her children with no job, how to look for another job after making such a mess of this one. Why couldn't Donald have come to see her just a few minutes later? She needed him so much right now.

Except that she must look frightful, since two or three customers had discreetly avoided her eyes when she served them, and one of the regular browsers, a fellow who never came to buy, but only to look, asked her if she was having a bad day.

She almost told him it was none of his business, but just turned her back on him instead.

"You don't have to take it out on me," he said.

Stephen had apparently stopped being mad by then, because he came to her rescue. "Cyril," he said, "there's something new for you to see," and led him to the philosophy section.

The rest of the day, Hope felt as frail as tissue paper, as if she might tear with the slightest pressure, but she managed to pull herself together. Donald might come back, after all. Besides, she had to show Claire she'd made a mistake, even if it was too late to change anything.

When the end of the day came, she dreaded going to the drugstore. It meant another ordeal. Fortunately, she was too exhausted to care what the clerk might think about someone buying pinworm medicine, so she just asked for what she needed, paid for it and left.

One thought kept her going. If she could make it through the next few hours, just until the children were asleep, then she could have the luxury of collapsing. For she couldn't tell them she'd lost her job until she had a plan.

Still, they must have sensed something, or maybe her exhaustion was catching. They were subdued over supper

and took the recommended dosage of red pills without comment. The only sour note came when Shelagh said Margie was making faces at her, and Margie responded by kicking her little sister under the table.

Hope began to clear their plates away, as she didn't have the energy to intervene. The girls gave up their antics and galloped upstairs as if they were the best of friends.

When the children were asleep, the quiet and solitude wasn't quite the gift Hope had imagined. Surely she didn't have to deal with this alone. After all, hadn't Donald come by the store to see her? Why shouldn't she call him? Why shouldn't she ask for some loving when she needed it the most?

Except, she didn't have his phone number. But he'd be listed under his company name. Donald Macdonald Investment Counselling, and the number above would be his residence. Why was her heart pounding and her throat all tight? Why was she so nervous if she was doing the reasonable thing?

He cared about her. He'd want to know. He wouldn't have made love to her if he didn't care.

"Hope, what a surprise!" he said when he heard her voice, "I thought maybe you were avoiding me."

A delicious relief flooded over her.

"You didn't ask for me," she said.

"I didn't want to be too obvious, get you in trouble with your boss. Besides, I was in a hurry."

"Well, you won't have to worry about my boss anymore," Hope was embarrassed at the half sob in her voice.

"What do you mean?"

"Claire gave me notice."

"She didn't! Why?"

"I was late again . . . it was . . . crazy here this morning."

"Not the ex, I hope. Did he give you a hard time?"

"No, but . . ." Hope remembered what'd been bothering her, "I wish you hadn't left me alone to face him like you did."

"What was I supposed to do? It wasn't any of my business."

"But . . . yeah, I see what you mean."

"Why don't we worry about what I can do for you now? Would you like me to come over?"

"Oh, yes."

Hope then had the problem of getting herself presentable. Fortunately, Donald took a little longer than she expected, so she managed. Not that it mattered, since it wasn't long before they were kissing, then lying on the Chesterfield, then on the floor and finding their clothes were getting in the way.

"Mummy . . ." it was Shelagh's voice, a little tentative, halfway down the stairs.

"What is it darling?" Hope yanked her sweater down over her breasts; her bra was out of reach. Donald zippered and buckled himself together in record time and was already reaching for his watch. He'd taken it off when it got tangled in Hope's hair.

"I had a bad dream," whimpered Shelagh, now from the bottom of the stairs.

"I should go," whispered Donald.

"No, wait for me, please."

Shelagh's bad dream was forgotten as soon as she was tucked in again, and she was asking about the man downstairs.

"He's just a friend who's visiting Mummy."

"Can I say good night to him?"

"Not this time."

When Hope made it back downstairs, she was disappointed to see Donald had his jacket and shoes on and was waiting to leave.

"I thought maybe you could stay the night," she said.

"I don't think so. Look, Hope, you aren't going to like me for this, but this is too complicated for me."

"What?"

"It just isn't a good time. You're lovely. I like you. And I respect you a lot for what you're doing, but . . ."

"But you just can't handle a woman with children!"

"Shush. You'll wake them."

"Donald, please, don't do this. They're good children. You'll like them when you get to know them. They'll like you."

"I'm sure that's true, but it's not a scene I want to be part of right now."

"I wish you'd thought of that before Saturday night."

"Yes, I'm sorry about that. I'm really sorry, but I have to go."

And there was nothing more Hope could do or say to make him stay. He kissed her on the cheek, on the top of her head, and then closed the door behind him. She watched from the window of the sunroom until he drove away. Then she sank to the floor and wished she were dead.

When Hope woke the next morning, she was still lying on the sunroom floor, but someone had put a blanket over her. She could hear the children whispering in the kitchen, and there were breakfast sounds but no smell of anything burning. She knew she'd have to get up and deal with things, her pain over Donald, the worry about getting another job . . . There wasn't any choice about that. But for the moment, it was good to just lie there and listen to her children taking charge.

On Hope's last day at the bookstore, the staff officially took her for lunch, and everyone seemed surprised when Claire picked up the whole tab. Claire was acting as if she and Hope were parting on good terms. She made a big point of wishing her well and asking about the children. They'd appreciate having Mom home full time, she said. Still wanting to take the credit, it seemed.

Hope wondered why people who didn't have children, people like Claire - even people like Donald - seemed to think that having children meant you had no other life. As usual, she didn't try to set Claire straight; it was probably hopeless anyway.

The lunch was friendly and the restaurant expensive, though it wasn't as elegant as the place Donald had taken her for coffee that time. This week, it didn't hurt quite as much to think of Donald. Hope hadn't seen him, and she'd managed to resist phoning. He'd telephoned once, just to see if she was doing all right, he said.

"What's it to you?" she wanted to ask, but knew that would sound too self-pitying. Instead she said "fine" and told him Stephen was quitting the store too; he'd bought into a second-hand bookstore, and it seemed as if Hope could work for him. That was another thing Claire didn't know yet. Donald seemed relieved.

Hope didn't tell Donald, however, what had happened the night Stephen came by to talk about the other bookstore. She wasn't sure how it had started, except that she'd been telling him about Donald and about being alone with so much to worry about. He'd been brotherly and understanding, and had put his arms around her. She'd liked the feel of him and noticed that his cuffs were rolled up to reveal thick black hair on his forearms, startling because his hair wasn't that dark. There was something very manly about hairy forearms, she decided.

In no time they were kissing, and Hope wondered whether the hair on Stephen's chest was as black as the hair on his arms, so she reached for the button at his throat. Suddenly Stephen pushed her away, mumbling that he was only offering her a job, nothing more. Then he bolted for the door.

It was embarrassing to have to see Stephen at Claire's store afterwards. By that time she had only a few days left and hated to spend them avoiding her one ally. After a day of awkwardness, however, they seemed to be friends again.

The other store wouldn't be reopening for three months; that should give her time to get over everything. Fortunately for her finances, she'd be helping with the cataloguing and stocking shelves. So it seemed that she was going to be able to manage, though it wasn't going to be easy. In a way, she was proud she could do it without a man. In the future? Who knows? All sorts of things could happen. She had her kids and lots of years ahead of her. ♦

THE END

(This concludes the serialization of Fighting the Odds by Edmonton writer Allison Kydd. Those who have missed earlier installments may wish to ask for previous issues from a vendor or the Our Voice office. Kydd is also hoping to publish this story and her earlier serial, Emily Via the Greyhound Bus, in book form.)

Cec Garfin on the

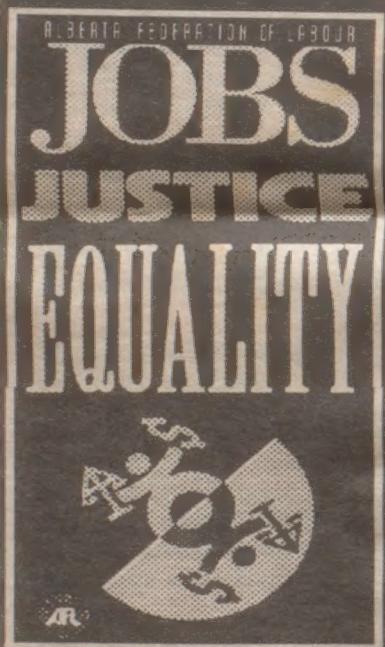
STREET SEEN



Prosper Place started up on a small scale in September of 1997 at McDougall United Church. It moved to its present location at 10584-107th Street (426-7861) this past September. Prosper Place works "to create a consumer driven restorative environment which will enhance the quality of life of those suffering from mental illness or brain injury."

There are three elements of Prosper Place. Members have the opportunity to influence the decision-making process regarding all working aspects of the Clubhouse. It offers a safe place or what is called a Restorative Environment, where they can relearn old or develop new skills necessary to lead productive, dignified, socially satisfying lives. It helps enhance members' quality of life by providing opportunities to become a significant part of a vital and growing community.

Joanne Spillett, Clubhouse Director says



NEXT MONTH

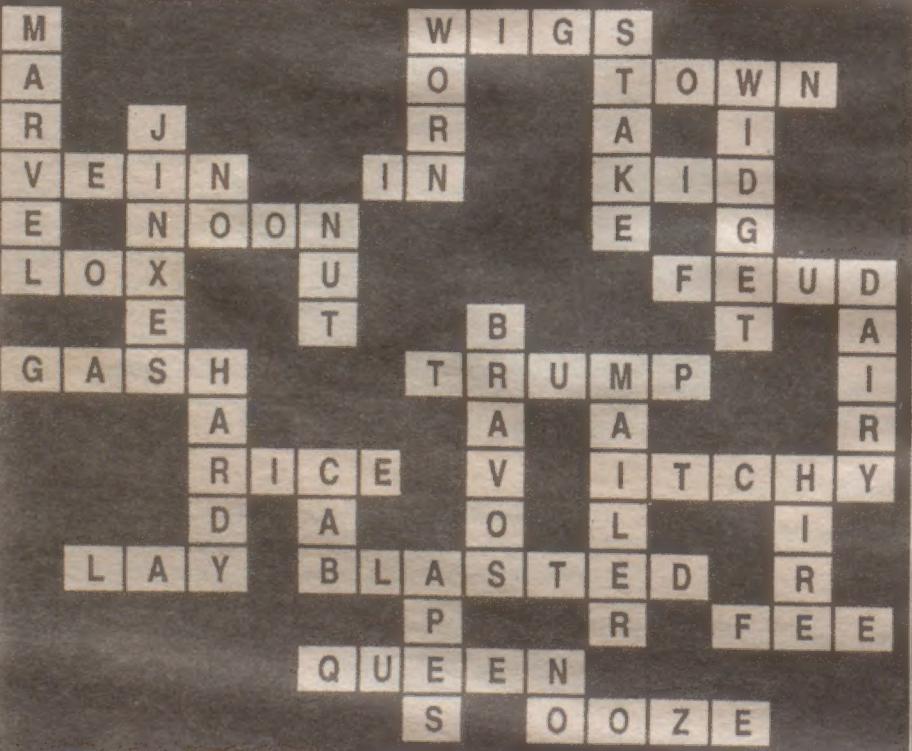
in Our Voice

- "Justice" for the Poor
- Still making less than \$4/hr in Alberta
- Psychic predictions for the year 2000

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Solutions to last month's crossword.



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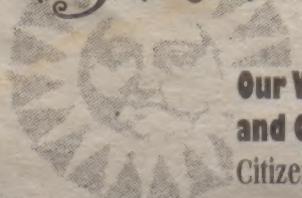
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Citizen of the Month



EVERY MONTH in Our Voice, we will be featuring someone who has gone the extra kilometre in their lives or in their careers to make a difference in the lives of those who are less fortunate.

The Citizen of the Month will receive a dinner for two courtesy of the Garneau Café Mosaics on Whyte Avenue.



George Descheneaux

George hocks his **Our Voice** magazines on the corner of 101 Street and Jasper Avenue. He has been selling the magazine in that location for two years.

"This is my job and how I make my living. I pay for my rent, food and other necessities with it," he says.

George, as our vendor of the month, would like

to wish all of his customers a very merry Christmas and thank them for their continued encouragement and support. ♦

VENDOR Profile

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Our Voice



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CITIZEN OF THE MONTH



Judy Dube

Cec Garfin

Judy Dube is embarking upon her third year with Operation Red Nose as the volunteer coordinator. She's also volunteered at the Keyano swim club for ten years. She has also been involved with parent counseling groups and parent teacher groups. These days her major occupation is work at the Terra Agency, an agency for pregnant teens and new teenage mothers.

"Volunteering is a great way to meet new people," Judy says.

Her desire to play an active role in the lives of her children was her motivation to be involved in their interests whether it be school or any other activities. Judy devotes a hundred percent of her effort in her causes because she so strongly believes in their value. She doesn't expect volunteers to do any task she hasn't done or wouldn't do herself.

Anyone interested in volunteering for Operation Red Nose can call 421-4444.

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HAPPY PAGE

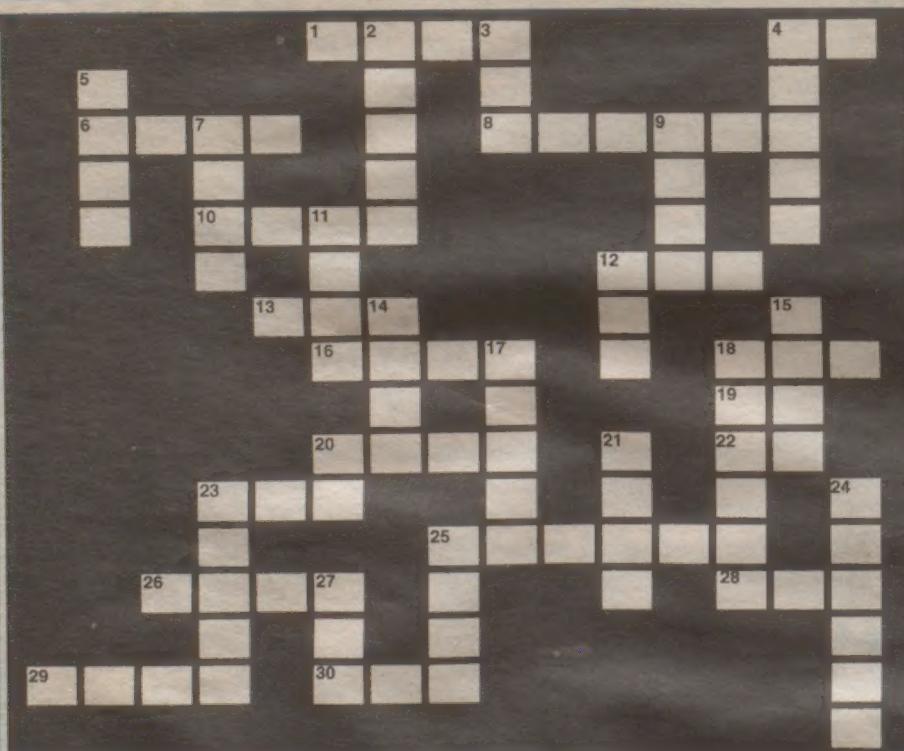
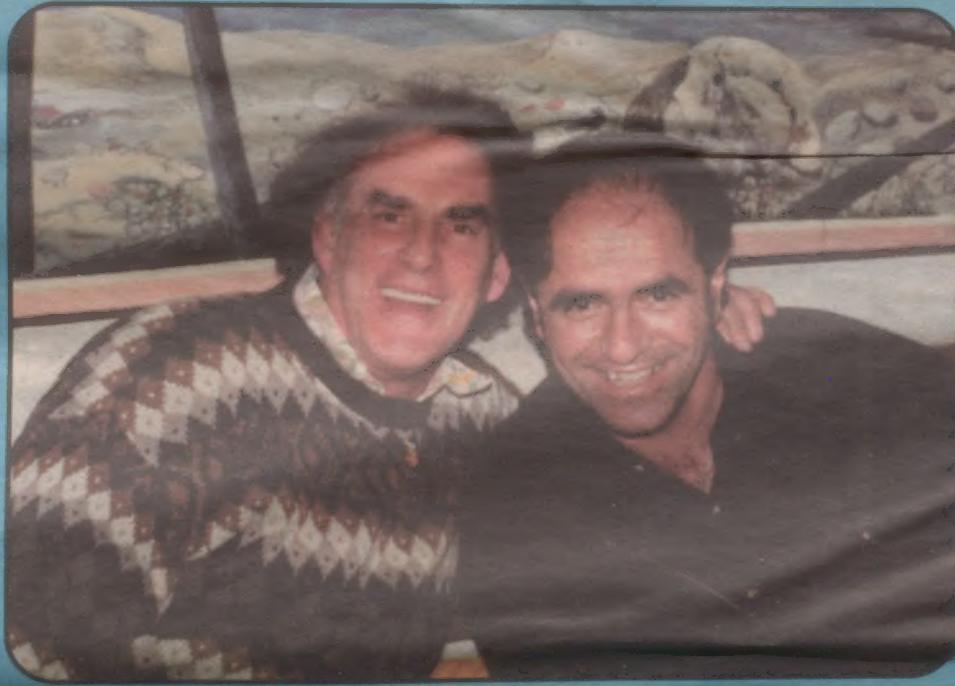


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Pete's Scrabble Crossword

ACROSS

- 1) Naval staff
- 4) Greeting
- 6) The other hand
- 8) Laboured
- 10) _____ and groan
- 12) Yoo hoo!
- 13) Large pot
- 16) Uncommon
- 18) Bachelor apartment?
- 19) Light switch position
- 20) Mickey, Minnie, etc.
- 22) Not them
- 23) Chap
- 25) Hidden
- 26) Gin _____
- 28) Very, very bad thing
- 29) Lubricates
- 30) Not home

DOWN

- 2) Mature
- 3) Humour
- 4) Row of bushes
- 5) Gossip
- 7) Notoriety
- 9) Body of water
- 11) Door position
- 12) Ben _____
- 14) Hack
- 15) S.U.V.'s
- 17) Opt for
- 18) Many ounces
- 20) Not your
- 21) Sunrise
- 23) Strides
- 24) Omit
- 25) Transmitted
- 27) Calgary attraction

Soupline Bob

